



Immoderate  
MOURNING  
FOR THE  
D E A D,

Prov'd Unreasonable and Unchristian.

*Richard* O R, *Unworn*

Some Considerations of general use to  
allay our sorrow for Deceased

Friends and Relations ;

But more especially intended for Com-  
fort to PARENTS upon the  
Death of their CHILDREN.

---

By JOHN OWEN, Chaplain to the  
Right Honourable *Henry Lord Grey*  
of *Ruthen*.

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2 Cor. 6. 8. *As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing.*

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*Detestandæ sunt illæ lachrymæ, plene Sacrilegio, In-  
fidelitate plenissimæ, quæ non habent modum.*  
*Hieron. Epist. ad Paulam.*

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Unrecorded  
by Wm  
To the Excellent and Virtuous  
Lady, the LADY JANE  
MUSTERS, of the Pa-  
rish of Harnsey in the County  
of Middlesex.

MADAM,

When I first heard of  
the Death of your  
Dear Child, and  
only Son, I much deplored your Loss,  
and was greatly concern'd to think  
how you would bear it, as consider-  
ing that your affections towards him  
were exceeding great, and surpas-  
sing the common and ordinary Love  
of Women; and that your Heart  
was set so much upon him, that  
your Life seem'd to be wrapt up in  
his;

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his; so that he could hardly die, but his Death must go near to kill you too.

I knew indeed your Prudence and Religion to be very great, yet I much feared that upon so severe a tryal, your Passion might get the start of your Reason, and so far overcome it, as to prove a great prejudice to all wise Considerations: And as I feared, so I was credibly inform'd by some that were Spectators of your sorrows, that you laid the Death of your Son so much to Heart, and was so deeply ingulph'd in sorrows, that like Rachel you refused to be comforted: And the truth is, you had a singular loss, and therefore might very well be afforded some grains of allowance in sorrowing more than ordinary for the loss of  
your

## Dedictory.

your only Son ; the most intense sorrow being described and represented in Scripture by Mourning as for an only Son.

And therefore when I understood that you took on so heavily, and continued mourning and afflicting your self at such a great rate, I thought it my duty to do my best endeavours (as having received so many Obligations from your Family) to support part of the foundation when it was sinking with the weight of overmuch sorrow. And whilst I was studying for some Counsels that might be proper for one in your case, it was my misfortune to meet with the like sad Providence in the death of one of my own Children, which made me more sensible of the greatness of your loss, who was bereav'd of your

A 3

only

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only Child ; so that I had now a new work to do , which was to master my own Grief, and to keep those sorrows within compass, which naturally arise upon the loss of our nearest and dearest Relations : whereupon immediately I consulted not with flesh and blood, which I knew would lean more to the side of Passion than Reason, but begg'd of God that he would endue me with wisdom from above, and that whilst I shewed the resentments of a man, I might behave my self like a Christian, and not sorrow like others without hope. And being by the Divine Assistance supply'd with the Considerations in the following Discourse, which wrought effectually upon me towards the mitigating of my sorrows ; I thought that the same remedy which I found from  
them



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them might very rationally be propounded to another, and probably work the same Cure upon your Ladyship, which they had done upon my self. And so Cicero relates of himself, that being in great affliction for the loss of his Dear Daughter Tullia, he was forc'd to fly to the Precepts and Arguments of some famous Philosophers for comfort and relief, and to propound to himself the Examples of some Eminent Persons who had behaved themselves with great temper and moderation under the like sorrowful circumstances. And notwithstanding all the wise Precepts & brave Examples of others, he found it so hard to be reconciled to Providence, and to conquer his Grief for the loss of such an Excellent and Virtuous Daughter, that he was fain

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to set upon writing his Book of Consolation, on purpose to divert his Melancholy, and to beguile the tediousness of his Sorrows. And praised be God, I have had the happiness to find the same benefit by Consideration, which Cicero did. And hope that having experimented the benefit of

*\* Deinde plus  
me habiturum au-  
toritatis non dubi-  
tabam ad excitan-  
dum te, si prius ip-  
se confurrexissem.  
Seneca ad Helviam.*

my own Counsels, I \*  
may be better qualifi'd  
to win both upon your  
Ladyships Reason and  
Judgment.

Indeed your Ladyship has had somewhat the greater tryal, as losing a Son, and an only Son, *Quid enim utilius filio? quid iucundius unico?* Sayes Cicero de Consolatione: What is more comfortable and useful than a Son? and what is more pleasant and dearer

to



## Dedicatory.

to us than an only Son ? And yet he tells us of \* Q. Fa-

bilius, who lost his only Son, one that was in a place of great Dignity and Honour in the Commonwealth, and had got a great reputation by doing brave and excellent

things, and would have been more famous if he had liv'd ; That he was so well reconcil'd to the Death of his only Son, and bore it so bravely, that he stood up and made a large speech, and a very trim, solid, and even Oration in Commendation of his Son, and recited his great Vertues without lamenting his Death.

And he makes further mention of  
one

\* At filium & unicum Q. Fabius, præterea Consularem, qui jam magnas res gesserat, & majores cogitabat, amisit : neq; solum non doluit, quod fortissimus animus fuit, sed etiam mortuo laudationem in foro dixit, &c.

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one Q. Martius, a King, who lost his only Son and Heir Apparent to the Crown, and of many others, as Xenophon, Cassius, Pericles, who had the misfortune to bury and lose their Sons, when they were come to be men, and were persons of great worth, of singular prudence and piety, and of a growing fame and reputation in the World; who carried it with great prudence and moderation, and shewed themselves great Masters of their Passion upon these sad occasions.

But perhaps these Examples of a Masculine patience may seem not to suit with the softness of your Ladyships temper, nor agreeable to the natural tendernefs of your Sex; Men being always accounted the more hardy and invulnerable, and less liable

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ble to the impressions of sorrow than Women, whose very constitution does give a list and advantage to their Passions ; for being the weaker Vessels they cannot so well contain their resentments, and support their spirits in affliction, as those that are stronger. And although the Poets feign that Niobe was turn'd into a Statue, because of her weeping so stily for the death and slaughter of her Children ; yet they make no mention of her Husband Amphion, thatt he was any ways concern'd at loss of them. And therefore some instances of the like patience and moderation in some of your own Sex, are more likely to prevail with your Ladyship, and to excite you to their imitation. I crave leave therefore to produce the same Examples which Seneca

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neca did to Marcia upon the very same account. Now the Examples which he produces are Octavia and Livia: Each of which had the misfortune to lose a Son, and they were a pair of very hopeful and pregnant Youths, and of great expectations in the World. Octavia, she laid so much to heart the death of her Marcellus, that she could not endure the least mention of his name, but was ready to sink whenever she heard it, and would not admit that the least word of comfort should be spoken unto her. Talis (says Seneca) per omnem vitam fuit, qualis in funere, she mourn'd and took on at the same rate all her lifetime as she did at the time of the Funeral. But Livia she behaved her self quite otherwise, and though she

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she lost her Drusus, who was a great man at present, and rising to be a Prince; yet she beheld the pompous Funeral that was made for him, and how his Death was lamented by the whole Nation as a publick and general loss, without falling into any great fit of Passion, and as Seneca phrases it, *ut primum intulit tumulo, simul & illum & dolorem suum posuit*, she buried all her sorrow in his Grave, and laid aside her grief as soon as he was laid in the ground. And having propounded these Examples to Marcia, he refers it to her wisdom and discretion which of them she would chuse to follow. But I dare not make any such proposition to your Ladyship, or make the least question which way your choice is determined, being

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being well assured that you steer all the actions of your life by the compass of Reason and Religion. So that I need not tell you, that Moderation is the Christians Motto, and that there is *quædam & dolendi modestia*, A Rule of Decency to be observ'd in our very Mourning.

And therefore if your Ladyship will be pleased to pardon the trouble and presumption of this Dedication, I shall add little more, but only to make some Apology, and to acquaint you with the reason why this Discourse was presented no sooner to your hands. And truly I can give you no other reason but what the Excellent Cicero and Seneca have given long before to excuse their writing their Tracts of Consolation

so



## Dedicatory.

so late to their Friends,

\* viz. that I thought  
a Comforter would  
hardly be admitted, or  
very welcome to you  
when you were in the  
Zenith of your sor-  
rows, and that it was  
improper, as Physi-  
cians think it in other  
Cases, to apply a Re-  
medy, or administer  
Physick till the Fit  
was over. But now  
that your sorrows  
have had a consider-  
able time to spend  
themselves, and that the flood of  
your tears, as may be presum'd, is  
pretty well abated, I thought that  
this Discourse would come at the most

\* Non enim ve-  
reor, quin, si mi-  
nus in ipso Doloris  
æstu remediis u-  
tendum Homines  
censeant, certè,  
cùm modicè Do-  
lor resederit, ac se  
paulùm quasi re-  
mittere cœperit,  
ad exstinguendas  
Doloris reliquias  
monita, præcep-  
taq; nostra adhi-  
beantur. *Cicero de  
Consolatione.*

Dolori tuo, dum  
recens sæviret, scie-  
bam occurrendum  
non esse, ne illum  
ipsa solatia irrita-  
rent & accende-  
rent. Nam in mor-  
bis quoq; nihil est  
magis periculo-  
sum, nec pernicio-  
sum, quàm imma-  
tura Medicina. *Se-  
neca ad Helviam.*

oppor-

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opportune and convenient time to have your Consideration, and to put a full stop to your Mourning.

And now that I have given your Ladyship the reason why this Discourse came so late, perhaps others may require a reason why it came so soon, and why I would venture to expose it to publick, especially in such a Critical Age, wherein the most Correct Discourses can hardly pass muster with some captious Wits, and escape their censure and reflection. But the most that I can say for my self why I have publisht such a slender Discourse is this, That although there is a great plenty of Authors who have written excellently well upon this subject of the great unreasonableness of intemperate Mourning for the Dead; yet few

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few have so confined themselves as to handle it with a particular respect to the loss and Death of Children ; which being a common and daily Calamity, and the sorrows thereupon so mightily prevailing, and judged to be not only natural but highly reasonable, I thought with myself, that it might not be amiss to endeavour to obviate this vulgar Error, and to lay down such Arguments as might be a perpetual fence against all inordinate sorrowings for the loss of Children. And I hope that my good intentions herein will make some Atonement for the failings of my Pen. And that it will be a great Provocation to some able and judicious Divines to set upon providing and furnishing the World with better and more substantial Arguments

B

against

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against this sort of Passion, which is often so violent and outrageous, both in Parents and others, upon the loss of their Children and Relations, to the great scandal both of their reason and their Christian Belief.

I have, as your Ladyship may easily see, avoided all flowery Expressions, or to deck up this Discourse with the paint and varnish of Oratory, as considering, that the plainer it was, the more suitable to wait upon a Lady in Mourning.

But after all it must be confess'd, that you have had a great affliction and a deplorable loss in the Death of your only Child, and only Son : But I doubt not but God will give you a better Name than that of Sons and Daughters; and that by your eminent  
Exam=

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*Example and practice of true Virtue and Piety, you will entail a greater blessing upon your Family, than if you left behind you a large and numerous Progeny. Now that you and your Relations may live long to bless the World with your Excellent and Pious Examples, and when you leave this troublesome Place, may be translated to a Kingdom of Joy and Peace, and rest Eternally in a Bosom of Blessedness, is, and shall ever be the Ardent Prayer of*

Your Ladyships

Most humble

and devoted Servant,

JOHN OWEN.

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COM-

MEMOIR

OF

COMFORT  
FOR  
PARENTS  
UPON THE  
DEATH  
OF THEIR  
CHILDREN.

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2 Sam. xii. 21, 22, 23.

21. *Then said his servants unto him, What thing is this that thou hast done? Thou didst fast and weep for the Child while it was alive, but when the Child was dead, thou didst rise and eat bread.*

22. *And he said, While the Child was yet alive, I fasted and wept; for I said, Who can tell whether*

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*God will be gracious to me, that the Child may live?*

23. *But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.*

**B**Efore I fall directly upon the words in the Text, it may be convenient and necessary to give you some previous account of the occasion of the Death of the Child which *David* had by *Bathsheba*, in the time of whose sickness *David* mourn'd exceedingly, and was much cast down, and took on heavily, and after whose Death he seem'd to be comforted, and to take heart; which occasion'd these words that I have now read unto you. Now in the Chapter immediately before this, we have a sad story and relation of *David's* Adultery and Murder; how that from the temptation of his own idleness, and *Bathsheba's* Beauty, he committed Folly with her,

her, and drew aside the Curtains of her Husbands Retirements; and when he had overcome and corrupted the Wife, there is mention of the great Artifices which he used to bring *Uriah* the Husband to cloak and cover this foul and shameful sin of his; and when *Uriah* out of pure Loyalty and a hearty Zeal for his service, refus'd to take that ease and pleasure which *David* under a colour of love and friendship advis'd him to, and when all those little arts and ignoble devices of entertaining him in his Palace, and at his Table, and making him drunk, would not bring *Uriah* to his purpose, then how basely and unworthily does he plot and contrive his Murder, by giving Orders to his General to set him in the most dangerous place, in the Front of the Battel? which poor Innocent *Uriah* might possibly take for an Honour, and interpret it an Argument and esteem of his greater Courage, when in

B 4

truth,



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truth, he was onely plac'd there as a mark to be shot at, and to fall a Sacrifice to his Sovereigns Lust. Which accordingly hapned, *Uriah* being slain upon the spot, and dying in that station where it was not likely he should live. And when *David* had thus secretly in his heart designed *Uriahs* Death ; yet when news was brought to him that *Uriah* was dead, he cunningly and sily pretends to look upon it as no other than a Casualty, the misfortune of War, saying with himself, that such chances will come ; and bid the Messenger tell *Joab* that there was no reason why he should be troubled or concern'd at the Death of *Uriah* ; for there was no saving any mans life in Battel, none could be priviledg'd from Death in Warlike Encounters ; and that the Arrows or Bullets made no distinction, and that all are alike liable to destruction, and that *Uriah* might



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as well fall and be slain as any other in the Army; which is the sence of those very words which *David* caus'd to be return'd to *Joab*, in the 25. ver. of the foregoing Chapter. *Then David said unto the Messenger, Thus shalt thou say unto Joab, Let not this thing displease thee: For the Sword devoureth one as well as another.* And lastly, When *David* had thus dispatcht and caus'd the Innocent Husband to be made away, he then takes the guilty Wife into his possession and marries her, and expects to live many happy and pleasant days in mutual endearments. But though *David* thought that the marrying her would legitimate their love, and take off the old scandal of their former Embraces, yet it was an act highly offensive to God, and is so exprest in the last v. of the Chapter, *And when the mourning was past, David sent and fet her to his House and she became his Wife, and bare him a Son; but the thing which David*

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David had done displeased the  
Lord.*

But then notwithstanding that *David* had committed those two horrid sins of Adultery and Murder, yet he had not any true sense and feeling of his guilt, nor that remorse of Conscience which he should have had for sins of that Crimson die; but he rubs on a considerable time, without any regret or sign of repentance: which insensibility and hardness of heart we may justly ascribe to his living in ease, and enjoying the Charms of *Bathsheba's* Beauty, which at first inticed him to sin and afterwards made him forget it, whilst his Soul was steep'd in pleasure and triumphing in the injoyment of his new Spouse. But whilst *David* was in his Nuptial jollity, and swallowed up in fond Caresses and doting upon that Beauty which had formerly bewicht him, God stirs up his Prophet *Nathan* to give him some check and interruption in his solaces, by  
pro-

*Death of their Children.* 7

propounding something that might bring his late horrid sins to his remembrance.

And accordingly the Prophet does his office, and propounds to him the Parable of the poor man with his little Ewe-Lamb. How that this was his only Companion, his only Darling, his Bosom Friend, that he had nothing else to love and delight in, nor that he could call his own, but this one poor Innocent Creature ; and yet there was a rich man which had a numerous Flock, and enough to make a Feast for any Friend or Stranger whatsoever, and yet was guilty of so much incivility and injustice, as to take away this single Lamb from a poor man, with a pretence that he needed it to make an Entertainment, which he might have done without the least wrong or detriment to himself, as having such a number of his own, and so many which he might well have spar'd.

Which Parable was no sooner pro-

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propounded to *David*, but he resents the Act with a great deal of indignation, and delivers his opinion against him that should do such a fact, as an unpardonable offender, and that he was guilty of such a high piece of injustice, that he was not fit to live. For him that had enough of his own, and yet to invade the right and property of a poor man, and to rob him of his little All, was in *David's* Judgment an unsufferable wrong and injury, and that he that did it, deserv'd nothing less than Death; for so are the words in the fifth ver. of this Chapter: *And Davids anger was greatly kindled against the man. And he said to Nathan, As the Lord liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die. And he shall restore the Lamb fourfold because he did this thing, and because he had no pity:* So just and severe was *David* in condemning the robbing of a poor man, and taking away the small substance he had.

But

But then when the Prophet took upon him to make a nearer Representation of the case, and to bring it home to himself, and point-blank to charge him with the like injustice which he had so severely condemned in another, saying, *Thou art the man*: We must needs think that *David* was much startled when the guilt recoil'd upon himself, and that his own Conscience made the rebound. But then when it was brought so close to him, that there was no avoiding his own self-Condernation, *David* presently makes an ingenuous Confession, saying, *I have sinned against the Lord*. And such we may observe are the mercies of God, that his pardon follows immediately upon his Confession. *And Nathan said unto David, The Lord hath also put away thy sin, thou shalt not die*, in the 13. v. Howbeit, in the next v. says the Prophet, *Because thou hast by this deed given great occasion to the Enemies of the Lord*

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*to blaspheme, the Child also that is*  
*born unto thee shall surely dy.* Where  
we may observe, that although God  
was pleased to grant him the greatest  
pardon of his life; yet he does not  
give him a general pardon from other  
Punishments, but assures him at the  
same time that he granted him his  
life, that he should have such a pu-  
nishment wherein he might read  
the nature and deserts of his sins.  
*The Child that is born unto thee*  
*shall surely die.* From whence it  
may not be unuseful to observe, that  
God is pleased sometimes to lay the  
Punishment due to the Parents sin  
upon their Children, and so here  
*David* had sinned and the Child  
must die for it; which may be of  
great use and moment to make peo-  
ple more wary and deliberate how  
they enter into the Holy State of  
Matrimony: For though it be a Di-  
vine Institution, and ordained of  
God in Paradise, and the State of  
Mans Innocency, yet there may be  
ways



ways of unhallowing Marriage, and turning that into a sin which was at first ordained for the greatest Blessing. For if only Interest, or Humour, or Lust, be the chief foundation and ingredient of our Choice; or if some sinful pre-engagement or lewd Amours make Marriage necessary for the hiding our shame; or if any of these things do cause a Contract, or make up the match, we may expect that God in justice may blast and curse the fruits of our Body for the sin of our Soul, and for the sins of our flesh too. An instance whereof we have in Gods decreeing the death of *David's* Child; which though it was born in Marriage, yet God utterly dislik'd the Conjunction; the first occasion and grounds thereof being laid in Adulterous Embraces; *David* making no scruple to murder the Husband that he might obtain the Wife.

But when *David* heard that heavy sentence against his Child, that  
he

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he should surely die for his sin, might not he have confest himself altogether in the fault, and desired to suffer wholly himself, and have said as in another Case, *1 Chron. 21. 17. It is I have sinned, and done evil indeed, but as for this Lamb, this Innocent Babe, what has it done? Let thy hand be upon me, or my Fathers House, and not on this Child, that that should be plagued.* I say, one would think that *David* should have set himself to deprecate Gods displeasure against his Child upon his account, and desired to have sustained the burthen of his own sin: But the sentence was gone out, and what was written was written, and there was no reversing the Decree. And therefore all they that intend to change their condition, and desire that they may leave their Inheritance to their Children, had best look to it, and have a care that they do not make Lust, or any sinful Pre-ingagement, a Preamble and Introduction  
to



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to Marriage, for fear God disappoint them in their hopes and desires, and either write them Childless, or take away their Children in wrath for their folly and wickedness. For though God spared *David*, and gave him a grant of his own life, that he should not die; yet there is no begging the life of his Child, the Prophet reading its Destiny, *the Child that is born shall surely die.* So that for people to couple together in a scandalous and sinful way, and to make Lust the basis and foundation of Marriage, is to murder their Children in the Womb, and in a manner to predestinate them to destruction.

But then when *David* heard that his Child should not live, but was under a sentence of Death, and that according to the words of the Prophet it presently fell sick and was desperately ill, How then did he behave himself? Truly like a very kind and indulgent Father; for it was no

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sooner struck with sickness but *David* besought God for the Child, *And David fasted and went in and lay all night upon the Earth, and the Elders of the House arose and went to him, to raise him up from the Earth, but he would not, neither did he eat bread with them,* in the 16, and 17. v. of this Chapter. Here we see *David* in a sad and mournful posture, expressing all the symptoms and signs of a mighty sorrow, and being earnest in Prayer to God for it; which if all Parents would do the like upon the same occasion when their Children are sick, or any ways afflicted, they would find their Prayers to be a more efficacious way than all the Drugs of the Apothecary, or the numberless prescriptions of the Physicians for the recovery of their Children: *For the effectual fervent Prayer of the Righteous availeth much.*

But then we may consider, that *David* had great reason to bewail the  
the

*Death of their Children.* 15

the sickness of the Child, as first, being the effect and punishment of his sin, and secondly, upon the account of natural affection.

First, He had a great deal of reason to grieve and be troubled at the sickness of his Child, it being sent as a punishment for his own personal sin; and therefore when he saw it in misery and pain, and great anguish, and considered that it suffered all this principally for his sake, that he had the greatest hand in bringing all this trouble and sorrow upon it, and that he was the great Actor in the Tragedy, and this his sin occasion'd this great scene of sorrows: How could he do otherwise than lay the sickness of it to heart, and take on bitterly, to think that by the murder of *Uriah* he had caus'd the Death of his Child, and that by committing folly with *Bathsheba*, he had brought such an affliction upon their Issue? I say, such a consideration must needs wound *David* to the

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very heart, and cause him to make great Lamentations over the Child. And truly the same sorrows would become even the best Parents, and it might not be amiss for them to make some like Reflections. For the Parents are generally apt to impute the Distempers, the Sicknes, the Death of their Children, either to want of due care in their Nurses, or to the badness of the Air, or the unwholesomness of the Season, or ill diet, or the irregular course of the Physician; I say, though we are apt to ascribe the sickness and Death of our Children to these outward and secondary Causes, yet we should do well to suspect our sins as the cause of their misery and sufferings, and to believe that there is something more than ordinary in the afflictions of such harmless and innocent Creatures. Surely the Parents have sin'd though these poor Lambs suffer, and therefore it is good and convenient that all Parents do examine themselves,  
and

and see whether they need go any further than themselves to find out the true cause and original of those many weaknesses and distempers which they see in their Children, and for which they seem so much concern'd and troubled. How mightily are some Parents troubled to see their Children grow crooked and deform'd, and yet little consider that possibly their Children are the unhandfomer for their being so proud of themselves, and glorying in their Beauty ; others are griev'd to see their Children prove such Punies, so feeble and infirm , and of such a weak Constitution, and do not reflect upon the debaucheries of their life , and how they have lost their strength in *Dalilahs* Lap. And it is a general complaint and observation that every Age declines more and more in strength and virility, and that the latter Generation of men are dwindled almost into Pigmies in comparison of what they were formerly,

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and yet men do little consider, that Luxury and riotous Living may be assigned as the grand Causes and Reasons of this great Degeneracy. And we also see that new and strange Diseases do creep up daily and multiply and invade humane Bodies, and yet we seldom impute these decays and breakings of nature to the vices of our Progenitors.

Whereas we have just reason to grieve at the sight of those many Diseases which attend our Children, and those great infirmities which they often labour under, and the more reason to be humbled when we reflect upon our selves as the Authors of them. The truth is, we have laid a train of mischiefs in our Bodies by our Vices, which will certainly ruine and blow up our Children; we have Created Diseases in our Bodies by trespassing too much upon nature, and offering great violencies to our Constitution; we have broken and shattered our Bodies by  
great



great excess, by hard and unseasonable Drinkings, and that may be one reason why we deliver down such a weak and crasie Progeny. We have turn'd our Bodies into Bogs of uncleanness and putrefaction, by our lust and wantonness, and that may be a very proper reason why our Children carry about them such an Hospital of Diseases. We have made our Bodies Sepulchres and burying places of Wine, and that may be another reason why our Children become Corpses so soon, and go so early to their Graves; we eat and drink destruction to our Children by our Gluttony and Drunkenness, we dig their Graves as well as our own with our Teeth, and by swallowing down over-much, we prepare them for the devoration of the Worms; and 'tis not any whit probable or likely, that our Children should prove sound and healthful, when we distemper our Bodies, and treasure up Diseases. And we may con-



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sider, that we do propagate Diseases many times as well as our nature, and there are Diseases which (our Posterity find by woful experience) run in a blood; And therefore it is the duty of all Parents who desire the good of their Posterity, and have a regard to the welfare and happiness of their Children, to be very strict and punctual in observing the Rules of temperance and sobriety, and in keeping their Bodies pure and undefil'd; forasmuch as by a vicious and debauched life we store up Diseases for Posterity, and transmit great evils to our Generation. For 'tis certain, that by great excesses and impure mixtures we do corrupt our blood, and consequently must convey a taint to our Offspring, and a rotten Father seldom produces any other than a Consumptive Child; and besides, our Vices are as communicable to our Children as our Diseases, and who knows but that God might determine to take  
away

away *David's* Child for this very reason, lest he should *Patrissare* take after his Father, he being the Child of an Incontinent Father, and the Issue of such unhallowed Embraces. And therefore when *David* was devoting his Enemies, he makes this one of his dreadful Curses, *Let the iniquity of his Father be remembered with the Lord, and let not the sin of his Mother be blotted out*, in the 119. *Ps.* and 14. *v.* And truly I fear that there are too many ungodly Fathers and Mothers in the World, whose wickedness and folly is such, as that their Children suffer for it deeply, being cover'd with Sores and Boils, and having such Diseases breaking forth as are plain marks and tokens of their Parents sins. God visiting *the iniquities of the Fathers upon the Children, and not suffering the iniquity of the Father to be conceal'd, nor the sin of the Mother to be blotted out.* And therefore those Parents that are conscious

22 *Comfort for Parents upon the*  
scious to themselves of any such great  
and foul sin as *David's* was, have very  
great reason to lament the Diseases  
and Death of their Children, when  
they consider, that they themselves  
were the great Instruments of bring-  
ing all those miseries upon their  
Children, and that their sins have  
had the greatest hand in their de-  
struction. And 'tis very well worth  
our observation, that in the first Age  
of the World it was never seen that  
the Son died before the Father, but  
the oldest always went first: But then  
when the wickedness of men grew  
great, and their Pride so great that  
they were too high for their Station,  
and would needs be building Castles  
in the Air, and climbing up to the  
Battlements of Heaven, it hapned  
presently afterwards that *Terah's* Son  
died before his Father, and there is  
a special note and mark set upon it  
as a kind of wonder, in the 9. of *Ge-  
nesis* and 28. v. *And Haran died  
before his Father Terah in the Land*  
of

*of his Nativity.* From whence we may observe, that the wickedness of a Father is enough to alter the course of nature, and to shorten his Childrens days, and to accelerate their Death, and bring them to the dust before their time. And thus I have been somewhat long on this Argument, that I might represent to you the danger of a sinning Father and Mother, and what a fatal mischief they do their Children by their wickedness, in that they bring a Curse upon their Family, and by their sin occasion the Death and ruin of an Innocent Child; as is clear and manifest in this one instance of  *Davids*  Child being taken away for the sin of his Father. And we may also remember what a grievous Curse God entailed upon old *Eli's* Family and Posterity, that they should die in the Flower of their Age, and be cut off in their very prime, and that chiefly upon the account of old *Eli*. And therefore Parents  
had

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had need take a care to please God, and that they do commit no great offence, and to keep from great transgressions, that so their Children may not repent that ever they were born of them, and suffer sadly for their miscarriages. And indeed all Parents that desire it should be well with their Children, and that they should live long and see good days, are concern'd to live a pure and unspotted life, to possess their Vessels in sanctification and honour, not in the lust of Concupiscence, otherwise they may bring great miseries upon their Children, and perhaps a sudden Death; and if they are resolv'd to continue their debaucheries and lewd Amours, they had even as good strangle their Children when they are newly born, and it may be a mercy to tear them in pieces as *Medea* did her Brother *Absyrtus*, rather than they should live to inherit their Phthisicks, Consumptions, and loathsome Diseases, and to be plagu'd

plagu'd all their life long with the miserable effects of their Parents sins. And truly all vicious and ungodly Parents have the same grounds that *David* had to lament over their Children when they shall see them sick of their Diseases, consuming with their Lusts, and expiring under the curse of their sins. And therefore if Parents would but take care to live better, and more vertuously, possibly their Children would not prove so sickly, and might live longer; for 'tis certain, that *David's* Child was sick, and died so soon, for the wickedness of the Father.

Secondly, *David's* great grief and mourning for his Child, during the time of its sickness, was very just and reasonable upon another account, as being an expression of humanity, and the result of a natural affection.

For our Religion has not like the Stoick seal'd up the fountain of tears, and wip'd them away from our eyes, whilst



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whilst we are in this bitter *Achor* and Valley of tears; but has given us liberty to vent our sorrows, and ease the inward griefs of our mind in a reasonable measure, according to the proportions of humanity, and so far as is consistent with, and not contradictory to our Christian hope; and therefore as to grieve immoderately is unlike a Christian, so not to grieve at all is unlike a man: so that *David's* sorrowing for his Child when he saw it in pain and anguish, was but a reasonable passion, becoming him as a man, in sympathizing with the sufferings of humane nature, and much more becoming him as he stood in the relation of a Father, whose Bowels, if he had any, must needs move and yearn over a sick and languishing Child. And therefore it was no such real matter of wonder, as the Spectators of *David's* sorrows thought it, to see him involv'd in tears, and making his Bed on the ground, and acting the part of

of



*Death of their Children.* 27

of a true Mourner, whilst his Child was alive ; for he saw it restless, and tumbling up and down for ease, and could find none ; he saw it in great pain and anguish, and that there was no helping of it ; he saw that Physicians were of no value, and all they could do could do no good ; he saw the Child lie panting and heaving, and bemoaning it self with sighs and groans that were unutterable ; he saw it in sore conflicts and struggling for life, and in the pangs and Agonies of Death ; and how could a Father forbear weeping and making great Lamentations over a Child in such a deplorable and sad condition ? He saw also the Mother wringing of her hands, and beating her Breast, and with floods of tears running down her Cheeks, and crying out, *What shall I do for my Child ? Lord spare my Child, Lord be merciful to my Child :* He saw likewise the Attendants that stood about not well able to endure the room, for the hollow  
sighs

28 *Comfort for Parents upon the*

sighs and sobs, and the piercing groans of a Child that was drawing on, and breathing out its last. And lastly, he saw the servants of his House very much clouded, and hanging down, and going mourning and heavily, & *quis talia fando, temperet à lachrymis?* Who can possibly forbear weeping almost at the rehearsal of such a large scene of sorrows? How could a Father restrain his tears when he beheld his own flesh and blood, and Bone of his Bone, to be in such great affliction? How could he endure to see his own Bowels torn from him without a deep and sorrowful resentment? How could he look upon a Child, an Innocent Child, rowling about in so much pain and torment, without being *περίλυτος*, heavy and sorrowful, even to Death? Would it not melt a heart of stone, and draw tears from a marble to behold such a spectacle of pain and misery? And therefore *Dauids* taking on so heavily

*Death of their Children.* 29

heavily for his Child in the time of its sickness, was very reasonable and justifiable too ; forasmuch as tears are the natural tribute which we pay to the sufferings of Mankind , and much more do we owe them to our Friends and Relations, and our dear Children, and such as are part of our selves.

But then, if *David* was such a man of sorrows , and took on so grievously for his Child in the time of its sickness, and whilst it was yet alive, surely we may expect to find him in a desperate condition and ready to sink into the Grave with it, when he heard of its departure. Certainly, he that was so much troubled to see his Child in pain, must be in the greatest Agonies of sorrow when he hears it is dead. He that could not endure to see it in misery, how will he bear the loss of it ? He that was ready to kill himself with grief for his Child when he was sick, surely cannot live when he is dead

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30 *Comfort for Parents upon the*

and gone, and past all recovery. This was that indeed which his Servants, and all that were about him expected. They supposed, seeing their Master had laid the sickness of the Child so much to heart, that he would be in strange confusions, and refuse to be comforted when he heard of its Death. But there was no such thing, the Scene is much altered and chang'd, and the expectation of his servants is much deceived: for instead of extream mourning for the Child when it was dead, he begins to revive and take heart, and falls to his meat, and takes those refreshments which he had lately refus'd. Which action and carriage of *David* shew'd very strange and a wonder to his Servants in the 21. v. But he presently removes the wonder, and tells them the reason why he mourn'd no longer, but rather rejoiced at the news of the Childs Death. *And he said, While the Child was yet alive I fasted and wept,*  
for

*Death of their Children.* 31

*for I said, Who can tell, whether the Lord will be gracious to me that the Child may live? but now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again? I shall go to him but he shall not return to me.*

In which expressions *David* does signify and declare the reasons why his carriage upon the Death of his Child differ'd so much from what it was when it was sick, and yet alive. *For I said, who can tell whether the Lord will be gracious to me that the Child may live?* that is, though the Child be desperately ill and past all hopes as to outward appearance, yet who knows but God may hear my Prayers for him, if they be made with true fervour and devotion, with zeal and integrity? Who can tell but upon my humble Petition and earnest Intercession for the Child, God may spare him to me, and give a further grant of his life, and recal the

32 *Comfort for Parents upon the*

black Sentence and Warrant for his Death, if there be such a due application made to him? For whilst there is life there is hopes, and there is mercy always with God, that he may be feared and supplicated unto, and therefore it may be expedient and useful to continue my Prayers and to proceed in my penitential sorrows. And thus did *David* argue the reasonableness of his sorrowing and humbling himself before God for the Child whilst it was yet alive.

And truly it would be an excellent and laudable thing in all Parents to follow this Example of *David*, so as to betake themselves to Prayer, and to use the deepest humiliation when their Relations and Children happen to be under the rod and hand of an afflicting Providence; for there is no such effectual means for their recovery as a hearty and sincere Prayer. *For the effectual fervent Prayer of the righteous availeth much,* saith St.



St. *James* in the 5.c. and 16.v. There is more vertue and efficacy in Prayer than we are ready to believe, and they have a more soveraign power to cure all maladies than the best prescriptions: This is the *Panacea vera*, and the great Catholicon, surpassing all those of humane Art and Invention, which some have so vainly boasted to find out. Prayer is the Universal Remedy, and has perform'd greater Cures, and greater Recoveries, and done greater wonders than all the *Elixirs*, or *Proprietates*, or *Nostrooms* of the most skilful and renown'd Physicians. It was Prayer that restored *Hezekiah* from a dangerous sickness, and prolong'd his Days; it was Prayer which supported *David* under all his troubles, and gave him ease in his greatest extremities; it was Prayer that opened the eyes of the blind, and ejected the Devils, and did the most glorious things to all Admiration: and therefore we must apply our selves



34 *Comfort for Parents upon the*  
to God, and depend upon our Prayers as the most proper and specifick remedy in afflictions. We must be fervent, and frequent, and importunate in Prayers to God on the behalf of our Friends and Relations, and who can tell whether God will be gracious to us that our Friends may live.

But then may some reply and say, it was in vain for *David* to use Prayer or any other means; it was to no purpose for him to expect the recovery of his Child, or that God should answer him though he pray'd never so much. For he knew that God had decreed the Death of his Child, and told him in as plain words as could be, by his Prophet, that the Child should surely die; and why then should *David* flatter himself so as to imagine that he could do the Child any good by his Prayers, or prevail with God for his Recovery? Why should he use that dubious Language, as, *who can tell,*  
'tis

'tis possible, or it may be that *the Lord will be gracious to me that the Child may live?* Why should he stand doubting or supposing a possibility of a thing, when God had positively declared the contrary?

To which I Answer, That God declared by his Prophet *Jonah*, the destruction of the *Ninevites*, and prefixt the time to just forty days, and this was declared with as great positiveness as the Death of *Dauids* Child by the Prophet *Nathan*, and the Prophet *Jonah* try'd and said, *Tet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrowen*, in the 3. of *Jonah* and 4. v. and yet after the delivery and promulgation of this sentence, the *Ninevites* did not despond, or utterly despair of Gods mercy, but fell to repentance and humbling themselves, and put the success to the same venture that *David* did, and much in the same Language, saying in the 9. v. *Who can tell if God will return and repent, and turn away from his*

36 Comfort for Parents upon the

*fierce anger, that we perish not?*  
And what was the Issue of their Repentance and Humiliation, and using the best means they could to divert Gods Judgments? Why the Issue was, that by their Repentance they stav'd off the judgment and put it back, as we may see in the 10. and last ver. *And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil ways, and God repented of the evil that he had said, that he would do unto them, and did it not.* And so in the 20. Ch. of the 2. of Kings, God ordered the Prophet *Isaiab* to go and carry to *Hezekiah* the same message of Death, and to acquaint him that he must expect no other than Death. *Thus saith the Lord, Set thine House in order, for thou shalt die, and not live:* Could any thing be more absolute and positive than these words? and yet *Hezekiah* instead of melancholizing himself with the thoughts of Death, or expecting it every hour, *turned his face*

face to the Wall, and prayed unto the Lord, saying, I beseech thee, O Lord, remember now how I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight: and Hezekiah wept sore, in the 3. ver. And what good, will you say, could Hezekiah's praying, and weeping, and appealing to the Righteousness of his life do him? Could that or any thing else save him and prevent his dying, when God had so solemnly Decreed? yes truly his Prayer and Repentance did him so much good, as to prevail with God to grant him a longer Lease of his life; and ordered the same Prophet that had just now told him of his Death, to return forthwith and acquaint him also that he had reversed the fatal sentence: Turn again, and tell Hezekiah the Captain of my people, Thus saith the Lord, the God of David thy Father, I have heard thy Prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will

38 *Comfort for Parents upon the*  
*will heal thee; on the third day*  
*thou shalt go up unto the House of*  
*the Lord. And I will add unto thy*  
*days fifteen years.* What then shall  
we say, that there is any change in  
the Divine Decrees, or any incon-  
stancy in God, or that he is worse  
than his word, when he thus posi-  
tively denounces judgment, and yet  
suspends it? *God forbid,* says the A-  
postle, *yea let God be true, but eve-*  
*ry man a liar, as it is written, that*  
*thou mightest be justified in thy*  
*sayings.* And therefore for the clear-  
ing of God from all imputation of  
falshood or mutability in these in-  
stances of his judgments denounced  
against sinners without any actual  
execution, we are to understand that  
those threatnings of God in Scripture,  
which run in an absolute form, have  
a condition imply'd, that is, *Nine-*  
*veh shall be destroyed, and Heze-*  
*kiah shall die except they repent:*  
So that God does still reserve a pow-  
er of revocation, and puts in a con-  
ditional

ditional clause of repentance, which though it be not exprest, yet is always to be understood; and therefore where Gods threatnings of death and destruction seem most peremptory and final, we are yet to attempt the diverting and preventing them by our Prayers and repentance; we are to use the means, and as we say, leave the success to God: For who knows but the Lord may be gracious? But if God will not hear our Prayers, nor accept our Repentance, as he did neither in the present Case of *Dauids* Child; yet we are to use the most proper means, and to try all the ways imaginable to pacify Gods anger, and to appease his wrath, and still to go on praying and repenting as *David* did. We are not to despond of mercy, or to despair of success, but at the very last push, and the utmost extremity of affliction, to say, *who can tell but the Lord will be gracious?*

And thus I have delivered to you  
the



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the just reasons why *David* mourn'd so exceedingly for his Child when it lay upon a Bed of sickness, and languishing: As first, considering that his own sin was the chief and declared cause of his Childs grievous and desperate sickness; and secondly, upon the account of that natural affection which is in all Parents toward their Children, which moves their bowels to pity and bewail them when they are in misery and distress.

But then the great wonder is, that the Father which was so much concern'd and deeply immerst in sorrow for the sickness of his Child, should give over mourning upon the death and loss of it; that his sorrow should expire and be at an end as soon as the Child was departed, and had given up the Ghost. *But now he is dead, why should I fast? Why should I trouble and grieve my self any longer? But how oddly and strangely, may some say, doth this*  
look



look in a Father , to dry his Eyes, and clear up his Countenance presently upon the death and loss of his Child ? Is not this a thing out of course, and a very strange temper, to sorrow so much for the Child when it was sick , and to cease sorrowing when it was absolutely dead and gone ? Surely, this giving over mourning at the death of so near and dear a Relation as a Child , must needs proceed from hard-heartedness, or the want of natural affection and of common humanity.

But then we may observe, that *David* both to excuse and justify his not mourning for the Death of his Child , nor taking on so grievously as he did before, alleges these good and substantial reasons, as first, The consideration of the necessity of his own dying ; and secondly, The impossibility of his Childs coming to life again. And we may also suppose that he had some further considerations at that time, which helped to

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to allay and silence his sorrows, as namely First, the consideration of the Childs dying in its Age of Innocency. Secondly, That it was gone out of a wicked and troublesome World. Thirdly, That it was freed from those pains, and sicknesses, and diseases, which are incident to this mortal condition. Fourthly, That it was released from those pains and miseries which it underwent: And fifthly, That it was the will of God it should be so. And it is but very reasonable to imagine, that all these considerations, though not verbally exprest, might occur to *Dauids* mind, or any mans else upon the like emergency.

I begin with the first consideration that put a stop to *Dauids* sorrowing for the loss of his Child, and that was the necessity of his own dying. *Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him.* David considered that Death was common to all, and that 'tis appointed for all men once  
to

Death of their Children. 43

to die: *What man is he that liveth and shall not see death?* in the 89. Ps. and 48. v. *And I know*, says Job, *that thou wilt bring me to death, and to the House appointed for all the living*; and so David was convinced that he must as surely die as he was then alive, and that life is but a short preamble to death, and why then should he grieve and torment himself for the loss of his Child, when nothing had hapned to that but what must also happen to himself and to all men living? For he was only gone the way of all flesh, and had paid that debt to Nature, which every one must do at one time or other, sooner or later. His Child indeed was dead, but that was but a common, natural and unavoidable thing, and the beaten road to the Grave, and the usual way of going out of the World. He considered wisely with himself that his Child was only gone before him, and that he must prepare to follow; that

44 *Comfort for Parents upon the*

that his death indeed was somewhat early and immature and sooner than ordinary; but the Father must not stay long behind. He saw that sometimes the buds and blossoms were nipt and fell to the ground, and that ripe fruit would certainly drop off; He observed that sometimes the Lambs went to the slaughter, and that there was no escaping for the old Sheep; And therefore it was in vain to be troubled at a thing which was past and gone and could not be helpt, and which all must submit to, young and old, the Father as well as the Child.

And what though it was a Princely Babe, and Heir to a Crown, and if it had liv'd might have been valued at as great a rate as his Father, worth ten thousand of the ordinary sort of people; yet Death was no respecter of persons, makes no distinction, and takes the ignoble and noble, the Prince and the Peasant, and sweeps away all alike; 'tis not a  
Crown

*Death of their Children.* 45

Crown or a great Inheritance that will purchase life, or deliver from Death; 'tis not a high descent or being of the Royal Blood, that will privilege or exempt from the Grave. But *David* himself must surrender up and lay down his Scepter at the summons of the King of Terrours, which had so lately cut off and prevented his Sons Inheriting the Fathers Glory; the branch is now lopt off, and ere long the root will be taken up and carried away. And therefore 'tis not long, says *David*, before I shall go to the same place, and be laid equal with my Child in the dust. He has only made the first hancel of my Tomb, and taken the first possession of my Grave. He has had the misfortune, or rather privilege, to go before me, but I am going apace to meet him. He was snatcht away betimes, and I only wait Gods leisure, and look when my change will come, and expect every day to be called away; and therefore I do

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not think it reasonable to imbitter this short life, or to make my self uneasy and uncomfortable the rest of my days, by a great and violent sorrow for the loss of my Child ; when I know that I have not much longer to live, and that the days of my Pilgrimage will shortly be at an end , and that his condition will shortly be mine , and we shall both meet together in the Grave, and be fellow Lodgers in the Dust , and sleep together in the same Chambers of Darkness; and therefore, says *David*, why should I fast? why should I macerate and waste my self? why should I grieve and pine away? why should I go and throw away my life in sorrowing for the Death of my Child, when I know that all the sorrow in the World will do no good? and that my Child has passed those Gates of Death, which I my self must after a little while strive and struggle to get thorough , and that he is now in his Grave out of which I cannot keep long ;



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long; and why then should I fast? can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.

*But he shall not return to me.* That's another Consideration which might well serve to pacify Davids sorrow and discontent at the loss of his Child; namely, the impossibility of its coming to life again, or returning to the same condition as formerly. *I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.*

Death is that which puts a perfect and absolute end to this present life, and when we are committed to the Dust and laid up in the Grave, there is no breaking forth, no expecting our liberty or enlargement till the day of the general Resurrection. *We are Prisoners of hope*, sayes the Prophet, that is, though we have a Promise and assurance of our rising again, and being delivered from the Grave, yet still we are Prisoners till the time of our Redemption comes,

## 48 *Comfort for Parents upon the*

and consequently must remain in hold, and under the strict custody and durance of the Grave. Death is a total privation of life, and *à totali Privatione ad habitum non datur regressus*, our Philosophy tells us, that is, though it be possible to recover the sight when the Organ of the Eye is only inflam'd or distemper'd, or grown over with a film; yet when a man is stark blind, and his Eyes are dropt out of his Head, then such a recovery is utterly impossible: and so Death being a total privation of motion, sensation, and all the acts of the animal life, there is no returning after that has once pass'd upon us, to any such vital operations, we are, says the Prophet *Samuel*, 2 *Sam.* 14. and 14. *ver.* *as water spilt upon the ground, which cannot be gathered up again,* that is, as Water spilt upon the ground presently vanishes out of sight, and sinks into the Earth, and by the diffuence of its parts is so disperst

disperst and wasted that there is no gathering it up again in the same quantity that it fell ; so Death causes such a dissolution of the parts of our Bodies, that there is no reuniting them in the same manner, or forming them into the same orderly lively Fa-  
brick by all the power and art in the World. *Can these dry bones live,* says the Prophet, is a Question that might very well be askt, as being a thing almost incredible, but that nothing is impossible with God. But then how is it that these dry bones will live ? surely not in the same way as formerly , nor can they be enlivened by any humane power or Art, but they shall be quickned by a miraculous power , by the same power which raised *Jesus* from the Dead ; but at present, during the time and reign of mortality, they must remain rotten, and shatter'd, and liveless, and only in a possibility to return to life by the wonderful power of God in the Morning of

50 Comfort for Parents upon the  
the Resurrection. And Job in the 24.  
c. and 14. v. asks much the same  
question, *If a man die, shall he live  
again?* where Job does not so much  
doubt or question the truth of a Re-  
surrection, as puts it out of all doubt  
by so propounding it; *if a man die,  
shall he live?* yes, he shall, but not  
by any power of nature to restore  
it self, nor that there is any remains  
of spirit in man after death which  
can quicken into new life of its own  
accord, nor that there is any seed of  
immortality in humane Bodies, as  
some of the Jews did fondly con-  
ceive, when they imputed the Re-  
surrection to the vertue of a Worm  
in the back-bone which never dies:  
And therefore though we are to be-  
lieve another life, yet we must be-  
lieve it in another place; For when  
our life here is once expir'd, there is  
no return of it, till God breath into  
us a new spirit of life, and inspire us  
with new vigour and motion. And  
therefore pray'd in another place, that  
God

God would continue his life a little longer upon Earth, as verily believing he should never see it any more when he had once left it; *Spare me, O Lord, a little longer; before I go hence, and be no more seen, Ps. 39.* and 13. v. *Man, sayes Solomon, goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets,* long indeed, whence there will be no moving or stirring a foot till the great day of Judgment. And not improper to our purpose is that observation of the Fox in the Fable, who when he was much urg'd and importun'd to go and pay a Visit to the Lyon in the time of his sickness, and told, that his Company would be more useful and serviceable to the Lyon, in order to the helping him to make his will, as being one famous for his wisdom and sagacity; answered, by no means, for there was a great deal of danger in going to visit this King of Beasts; For he had observ'd a great resort to the Lyon,

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but saw no marks or footsteps of any that ever return'd from him. *Vestigia nulla retrorsum*; and so may we say, that we have known millions that have enter'd into the shades below, but none that ever came back from thence; and therefore we find, that when *Dives* was in torment, and made this earnest request to *Abraham*, that one might rise from the dead and inform his Brethren of the truth of Hell torments, and by such a wonderful information might scare them from doing any thing that might bring them thither; yet this request was denied him upon this account, *Joh. 7. and 9. v.* there being so great a publication of a future State by *Moses* and the Prophets and other divine testimonies; and besides, *Abraham* told him, that between us and you there is a great Gulf fixed, which place is enough to evince the impossibility of a return to this World after Death; and therefore we imagin, that *David* at  
the



*Death of their Children.* 53

the parting of his Child took his final leave of him, bidding him an Eternal farewell, and an Everlasting good night. For he considered that there was no hopes of seeing him again under the same circumstances, or conversing with him in the flesh; and therefore having decently committed his Body to the ground, and laid him in the bosom of our common Mother Earth, and perhaps dropping a tear or two upon the Hearse, and besprinkling the Grave with tears, as our Saviour did *Lazarus* in testimony how much he lov'd him, he retires from the Funeral with great Solemnity we may imagine, but without any further Lamentations, saying, *wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.*

But then perhaps several may be ready to tax this Discourse with impertinency, and say, what needs there all this stir and ado to prove a thing

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thing that never was gainsaid or contradicted? as namely, the impossibility of the dead coming to life again, and rising out of their Graves to live anew in this World: who is so silly or credulous as to expect such a thing? or who would desire to see the Ghosts, or any representations of their Friends when they are dead and gone?

To which I answer, That I believe there is none so silly, or whimsical, or deeply melancholy, as to expect a return of their Friends and Relations from the Grave. But then people make a great Argument against themselves, and do highly condemn themselves of the greatest folly in their inordinate sorrowings for the Dead. For why should they take on and weep so bitterly for the loss of a Child or Relation, when they believe no such thing as a return from Death? why do they wound themselves with such mighty and piercing sorrows for their Relations, when they

they know they are dead and gone, and that there is no hopes of seeing them again as long as the World endures? This indeed is their folly to grieve for an irrecoverable loss, and to weep incessantly at the remembrance of deceased Friends. For 'tis the vainest, idlest thing that can be, to mourn when all the mourning in the World will do no good, neither to us or our Friends; and therefore this consideration, that all our tears are in vain and ineffectual, and that they may be spent as well upon a dead Tree as a dead Child, and recover one as soon as the other, may serve to suppress all the extravagant sorrowings of all persons for their Friends and Relations, and make them argue with themselves the unreasonableness of all such desperate mourning, saying with *David*, now they are dead why should we fast and take on so grievously, and refuse to be comforted, as *Rachel*, because our Children or our Friends  
are

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are not? For to what purpose is all our weeping, and mourning, and casting down our selves? can we bring them back again? no, that's utterly impossible, we shall go to them very speedily, and follow them close into their Graves, but there is no expecting to see them any more : they shall not return to us.

Thirdly, Another thing which might well stop *David's* sorrowing for his Child, might be this Consideration, That his Child died in its innocent time, and before it came to the Age of sinning.

For though it be a great happiness to have our Children live and grow up to be Men and Women, to see them ripen to the perfect use of reason, and to arrive at years of discretion; though it be a singular comfort and honour to Parents to see their Children grow eminent for Piety and Wisdom, and to become the great Lights and Ornaments of their Generation; yet the great unhappiness

happinefs in breeding up Children is this, that Parents are not fure of their Childrens Inclinations to vertue. And they are not certain though they give them the beft Education in the World, but that they may make an ill ufe of it, and turn the edge of their wits againft God and Vertue, and only prove more ingenioufly wicked, and great Criticks in Debauchery. For good Education does not always and infallibly make good men; and though our Children are fometimes very hopeful when they are young, and give great prefages and fpecimens of virtuous difpofitions, yet their inclinations are as uncertain as wind, and as unftable as water in that flippery Age, and 'tis a thoufand to one but that when they come from under the Difcipline of the Rod and *Ferula*, and are left more to their own liberty, and have the reins laid loofe upon their Necks; 'tis then, I fay, very great odds, but they will prove contrary

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contrary to expectation, and the by-  
ass of their inclinations be turn'd  
a wrong way. For whoever shall  
consider the flexibility of youth, and  
how easily it is seduced and led aside  
by bad Examples and great tempta-  
tions, which do every where abound  
in the World, cannot but think it  
a Miracle of Grace for youth to keep  
upright and unspotted from the  
World. It may indeed much fortify  
and preserve youth against the As-  
saults and flatteries of Vice, to be  
season'd with good and vertuous  
Principles: But if they are never so  
carefully Educated, and religiously  
brought up, yet when they come  
fresh and green into the World, they  
are ready to be bent any way, and  
most likely to lean to the wrong  
side, and to stand according to the  
bent of corrupt nature.

But questionless good Education  
will go a great way in making a good  
man, and has a great stroke and in-  
fluence upon the succeeding part of  
our



our life. But yet 'tis but a common supposition, that that Vertue which was so secure and flourishing when it was confin'd within Walls and out of the reach of temptations, may be in great hazard and danger when it comes abroad, and to live in the Air, and within the breath of temptations. For a Cloyster may secure that Vertue which perhaps would be lost if it walkt at large, and a School may send forth a good Lad, which perhaps Liberty and Company may corrupt and spoil. So that there is no depending upon or assurance of our Childrens Vertue whilst they are young, and before they come to the Regions of Choice, and make some experiment of themselves, how tenacious they are of Vertue, and how much they can hold out against the great and suitable temptations that are in the World; and therefore we are very fond and foolish to promise to our selves great matters from our Children, or to build over-

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over-much upon their future Ver-  
tue, and to please our selves with  
thinking what rare men they will  
make, and what great Comforts they  
will prove to us; whereas we know  
not what great alterations time may  
produce, and what years may bring  
forth. For although we may dote  
upon our Children when they are  
young, as *David* did upon his Dar-  
ling *Adonijah*, and applaud their  
Inclinations, yet they may get to  
head, and grow Masterless, and dis-  
obedient and incorrigible as *Adoni-  
jah* was, they may grow worse and  
worse as they grow older, and as  
*Jacob* said upon another account,  
may by their great undutifulness and  
ill behaviour bring down our gray  
hairs with sorrow to the Grave.

We are apt, too apt indeed to  
mutter and repine at the Providence  
of God when he takes away our  
Children when they are young, and  
of great hopes as we think and pre-  
sume; but God knows what manner  
of

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of persons they might have been, if they had liv'd, whether they might have prov'd good or bad, a joy or grief unto us. What if these hopeful Children had liv'd to imbibe ill Principles, to scoff at Virtue, to deride the Being of a God, and to make a mock of sin? what if they had liv'd to be profane and irreligious, and to prove such youths as we have some in these days, should we then have thought their life a Blessing, and not rather a Curse unto us? and who knows but there was a great mixture of mercy in Gods Judgment upon *David*, in taking away and bereaving him of his Child, lest he should have prov'd one of bad inclinations, as being sprung of a vicious Stock, and as the vulgar Proverb says, *that which is bred in the bone will hardly ever out of the flesh.*

We see how ill his other Children prov'd, *Tamar* was defil'd and ashamed of her self; *Amnon* was

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incestuous and brought a great stain upon his Family : and his Dearest *Absolom* was both a Murderer and a Rebel , and died in such a state of wickedness, that *David* was exceedingly troubled at his going out of the World in such an impenitent condition , mightily deploring his untimely Death, and wishing if God had so pleas'd, that he had laid down his life in exchange for his Sons, speaking it with the greatest ingemination, as a sign of the deepest sorrow, *O my Son Absolom, my Son, my Son, would God I had died for thee, O Absolom, my Son, my Son.* And if these Children of *David* prov'd so bad, who knows but the Child that died might have prov'd as bad as any of the rest in case it had liv'd ? Ah Beloved, we know not what manner of persons our Children will prove, what their qualities and conditions may be , and therefore we know not well what we do when we murmur at Gods removing them from

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from us. And if we do but look into the *Proverbs*, we may be easily convinc't (and observe how we read there) that Children are not always such blessings that we should desire so much their living, for they may be Curses as well as Blessings to us, according as they shall prove. *A wise Son maketh a glad Father, but a foolish Son is the heaviness of his Mother*, Prov. 10. 1. and in the 23. of Prov. and 24. v. *The Father of the righteous shall greatly rejoice, and he that begetteth a wise Child shall have joy of him*; and in the 17. ch. and 21. v. *He that begetteth a Fool doth it to his sorrow, and the Father of a Fool hath no joy*; and in the 25. v. *A foolish Son is a grief to his Father, and a bitterness to her that bare him*. In all which expressions we may see, that a man is much happier in having no Children than such as are foolish and vitious; and that nothing can be a greater grief and dishonour to Parents, than

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to have silly and wicked Children. What comfort is there in having such lewd and profane Sons as old *Eli's*, who brought a scandal upon their Father, and a Curse upon their Family, the whole Generation? Or what can be a greater grief to a Father than to have such a Son as *Jeroboam* the Son of *Nebat*, who made *Israel* to sin? that is, one that shall prove the pest of the Age, and the bane of Mankind? And therefore we need not be so greedy and desirous of Children, or so loth to part with them when we have them, unless we could have a better prospect of their conditions, and assuredly knew that they would prove Comforts and Ornaments to us, by their wisdom and good conversation. And therefore *David* might well comfort himself, and take heart after the loss of his Child, to think that though he had lost a Child, yet it was an Innocent Child, one that had no great sin, if any to answer for, on



that had not sullied its Soul with the least tincture of any actual sin or transgression, and that it went as pure out of the World as it came into it; whereas if it had liv'd to maturity, it might have been like the rest of the World, or died with some great sin upon it unrepented of, as well as some of his Children had done.

And truly the same consideration may well be made use of by all Parents, to bring them quietly to sustain the loss of their Children when they die in their nonage, and very young. And what can be a more comfortable consideration, than for Parents under such losses, to think that their Childrens Virtue if they had liv'd, was very uncertain, and that Vice was the most likely to prevail? that sin reigned more in the World than goodness, that the greater part of the World was stark naught, and that but few continued in it but contracted some spot or stain, and none

that

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that was perfectly Innocent? And therefore it might be a mercy to their Children to be set out of the reach of sin and temptation, and to have such an early translation to Heaven, before they had done any thing to hazard their Salvation, or to forfeit the love of God and title to Eternal Life and Happiness. Well may Parents pronounce their Children blessed when they die in such a state of Innocency. *For of such, says our Saviour, is the Kingdom of Heaven.*

Fourthly, Another consideration which pacify'd *David's* sorrows for the loss of his Child might very well be this, That it was remov'd from the great Evils and Calamity of the World.

This World (God knows) is but a troublesome place at the best to live in, and no man must think to go scot-free from troubles of one kind or other. The *Thracians*, as *Cicero* reports out of *Herodotus*, were wont

wont to weep at the Birth and Nativity of their Children, to think what a sad and troublesome Theatre they entered upon, and that they were born to know a great deal of sorrow and misery; but to rejoice at their departure and going off the Stage, to think that they then retired from the distracting cares and inquietudes of a troublesome World, and were past the reach and grievance of all misfortunes. This World is too low a Region to be free from storms and tempests, and there is no expecting a perfect serenity but above the Clouds; and there is no such happiness to be enjoy'd here as a freedom from all misery and trouble, he being the happiest man at present that meets with the least trouble or perplexity; and therefore no man of experience in the World needs to be told, that all here is Vanity and vexation of Spirit; and whoever shall consider the great changes of misery that are in the

110 F 4 World,

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World, from War to Pestilence, from Pestilence to Fire, from Fire to great Confusions which have happened, not only in the memory of many, but in our days, and within the compass of a few Years; and moreover, what great and terrible judgments are continually impending over our Heads, and full upon the Inhabitants of the Earth because their wickedness is great; and also the continual losses and crosses, the sorrows and disappointments which come of course, and happen according to the mutable condition of things below. Whoever, I say, shall seriously consider this sad revolution and mixture of sorrows, cannot judge it in reason good being here, or look upon the World as a desirable place to live in, much less think his Children or Relations the happier for being here. And therefore *David* might well think it unreasonable to mourn for the loss of his Child, when it was consider'd, that it was gone  
out

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out of a cross and troublesome World, where the highest and most advantageous condition (as himself had found by sad and woful experience) could not exempt a man from great Calamities, when he who was his Father and a King, was forc'd from his Throne, and put to his shifts, and driven from Post to Pillar, and perhaps was reduc'd to such great straits and extremities, that he would have exchang'd his condition with the meanest of his Subjects: How could he mourn for the Death of his Child when he considered that it was subject to the same Calamities as himself, and perhaps might prove every whit as unfortunate in the World if it had liv'd to succeed him, and might have Inherited his troubles as well as his Crown? And therefore he lookt upon it as a kind Providence, that God had so happily prevented the Childs seeing any of those miseries which the Father had felt, and thought it a singular

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gular happiness and favour of Heaven, that his Child went out of the World without knowing or being sensible what a trouble meant: whereas himself had been sufficiently tossed up and down upon the waves of affliction, and miserably broken with the cares and inquietudes of a troublesome World, and knew the World better than to esteem it the best or happiest place that his Child could be in. And truly all Parents would do well to consider how it has far'd with them, what usages and entertainment they have met with in the World, what reproaches and slanders, what losses and vexations have fallen to their share, and how troublesome a passage they have had; and I do not question, but that upon a serious reflexion upon the Calamities in their days, and their own private personal sufferings, they will be ready to confess with old *Jacob*; that the days of their Pilgrimage have been few and evil,



evil, and conclude them happiest that are out of it. And therefore all Parents have reason to cease mourning for the loss and death of their Children, upon the same consideration which we may well suppose *David* made use of, namely, that they are past the Waves of this troublesome World, and are taken away from the evil to come.

Fifthly, Another thing which might well prevent *David's* extream sorrowing for the Death of his Child might be this consideration,

That it was freed from those sicknesses and diseases which attend this mortal life.

No doubt but *David* upon the loss of his Child, did consider what innumerable Diseases do continually accost and prey upon humane Bodies, as first the many weaknesses and diseases that are natural to and attend our Infancy and Childhood, as the great pain of breeding teeth, the being subject to the small Pox, to in-  
gender

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gender Worms, to fall into the Rickets, and many other distempers which are common and peculiar to Childhood; besides the many dangers that Children are apt to run into, and the sad accidents that often do befall them, whereby they contract either lameness or deformity, or come to an untimely end. And if we have the good fortune to get safe over our Childhood, and to come to riper years, yet as we grow strong, so our diseases are stronger, and in our youth our blood is hot and feavourish and quickly in a flame, and our very strength of nature helps to augment our distempers, and makes them prove the more fatal to us; and when we come to the perfect state of Manhood, our very dependance and presumption upon the strength and benefit of nature, makes us bold with those Vices which oftentimes help to cut us off in the midst of our days, and then if we live to old Age, that is a Disease of it self, and nothing

thing but sorrow is our Portion, and the pains of Death lay hold on us : so that if we take a survey of our whole life, and of our passage from the Womb to the Tomb , we shall find that every stage and period of this mortal life is way-laid and beset with Death. And we know that there are certain dangerous seasons in the Age of Man which we call Climacterical Years, wherein our life is in great Controversy, and we have a push for it whether we shall live or die : And truly there are so many Diseases that are of course , and many more that are incidental and happen between our infancy and youth, that 'tis a great wonder that we ever live to be men, and much more that we should pass all those casualties and misfortunes which lie all along in our way to the Age of threescore Years and ten. And moreover it may be considered what a great fatality Gods Judgments make, what a great depopulation and vast havock

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havock of Mankind, the Plague, and  
Sword, and Famine do make; and  
that when these come they sweep  
away Millions as with the Besom of  
Destruction.

But then secondly, If we do further observe how many sorts and kinds of Diseases there are in the World, how that new Diseases daily start up, and that old ones so vary and alter in their circumstances, and contract such strange degrees of malignity, that they become new too; how also that some Diseases are acute, others Chronical, and that some are rackt with the Stone, others tortured with the Gout; some are drown'd in a Dropsie, others burnt up with a Feavour; and that there is scarce a man but has a Disease peculiar to himself, and proper to his constitution, and dies something a several way from his fellow Mortals: I say, whoever shall make this observation of the great swarm and multiplicity of Diseases which assault  
Mankind

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Mankind (and that whereas the Diseases now mention'd do kill their thousands, so there is a Consumption which kills its ten thousands, and deserves the Name of *Apollyon*, the great Destroyer of Mankind) must needs grant that the life of man is in jeopardy every moment. And that he is obnoxious to a great deal of misery whilst he lives.

But if my Courage or your Hearts would serve you to go into the Hospital, and there turn over the great Volume of Diseases, and see what huge havock they make; to behold how the Canker has par'd off the side of one mans Face, and rotted off anothers Nose, and eaten out an Eye, and carried away a Limb; to see how the Palsy has mortified another, and struck him half dead; and how many either by natural or vitious Consumptions are turn'd into meer Skeletons and walking Ghosts, and are only the shadows of men: Here you will say are sad spectacles of mortality,

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mortality, here are such sights of humane frailty, as are enough to make the hardest heart to bleed, and to squeeze tears from a stock. Who can forbear weeping and lamenting to see Man that is born of a Woman become the spoils of so many Diseases, and to be Anatomized and Dissected, even alive? Here then we may see the sad and dismal ruins of these fleshly Bodies, and what miserable Creatures we are when God is pleas'd to afflict, and to lay sore and grievous Diseases upon us. And truly we are all subject to various and manifold Diseases, which issue forth in effects according to their several kinds and qualities; the matter of most Diseases lies lodg'd in our nature and brooding within us: and we have the unhappiness to inherit some Diseases by traduction from our Parents, and there are many more which are hatcht by our Vices, and prove the most deadly and mortiferous. Some Diseases are so favourable



ble as to carry off quietly and speedily, and others are more cruel, and like the Tyrant multiply our Deaths, and kill us by piece-meals; and nothing is a truer observation than this, that we no sooner begin to live but we proceed to die, and are every day going forward and stepping towards the Grave. But then although life be a sweet and precious thing in it self, and it be natural for all men to desire to spin out the thread of life to the utmost length; yet God may send those Diseases upon us which may make us weary of our lives, and to wish for Death and the Grave; and so we find that *Job* was so pester'd with Diseases, that his Life was a burthen to him, and he does frequently and passionately beg of God to do him the favour to dispatch him, and put an end to his days, as we may see in the 6. *ch.* of *Job* and 8. *v.* *O that I might have my request, and that God would grant me the thing that*

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*I long for! even that it would please God to destroy me, that he would let loose his hand, and cut me off; and in the 3. ch. and 20. v. He speaks much to the same purpose, Saying, Wherefore is light given to him that is in misery, and life unto the bitter in soul? Which long for death but it cometh not, and dig for it more than for hid treasures: Which rejoyce exceedingly, and are glad when they can find the grave; and in the 7. ch. 3, 4, and 5. vers. He declares how uneasy and restless he was through the greatness and violence of his Diseases, and how severely he was handled: So am I made to possess months of vanity, and wearisome nights are appointed to me. When I lie down, I say, When shall I arise, and the night be gone? I am full of tossings to and fro, unto the dawning of the day. My flesh is clothed with worms and clods of dust; my skin is broken and become loathsome: and in the*

the 13. *ch.* and 14. *v.* He professes that he had so little joy and comfort in his life, that he would esteem it a mercy to die, saying, My Soul chuseth Death, and strangling rather than life. Nay, he goes further, and says, that he was quite out of conceit with living, and would not be immortal on Earth for never so much, they are his own words, *I loath it, I would not live always, let me alone for my days are vanity*; and in the 10. *ch.* and the 1. *v.* His afflictions seem to have been so great and lasting, that they almost wore out his patience, and he could not endure them any longer; which makes him speak like a man in great extremity and a desperate condition: Saying, *My soul is weary of my life*; and so David in the 6. *Ps.* and 6. *v.* utters himself in the same manner, saying, *I am weary with my groanings*; And therefore David might well cease sorrowing for the loss of his Child, when he consider'd the

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manifold Diseases that mankind is liable unto, and that it often happens, and that he himself had so experienc'd it, that men meet with such sorrows and afflictions that make them weary of the World, and exceedingly imbitter their lives, and why then should he be troubled at the death of his Child? and that it did not live to be in danger of enduring all the Diseases in the Bill of Mortality? And how did he know but that if it had liv'd, it might have prov'd of a sickly and weak Constitution, and perhaps might bring those Infirmities into the World with it as were past all Cure, and might be a sorrow to the Parents, and a misery to their Child as long as it liv'd. And besides, Children run many risques and hazards whilst they are young, and come oftentimes to great mischances; and either they contract a lameness by a fall, or lose one Eye or both by the small Pox, or are drown'd, or burnt, or kill'd unfortunately;

fortunately ; any of which would prove matter of greater sorrow to Parents than a bare natural Death. And therefore seeing God was pleased to take it away so very young, and that it dropt off with its first sickness, there was a great mixture of mercy in this sad Providence, and little reason to be griev'd at such an early Death, when it was so natural, and perhaps prevented the meeting many sad mischances, and a Troop of Diseases which are incident to this frail and perishing life. And truly all Parents have the same reason (which we suppose *David* had) to comfort up themselves after the loss of their Children, when they die very young; as considering that an early death may prevent a miserable life; and that it is much better to die young ; than to live longer and have such Diseases grow and hang upon us as shall make life a burthen to us. And indeed though we are extremely desirous of living, and are

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sad and melancholy when we think of dying; yet we may live so long as that we may have enough of it, and may meet with such sore Diseases as may rob us of all pleasure and comfort in living, and spoil our taking any contentment in the greatest enjoyments this World does afford us; we know how the case stood with *Job*, and how that afflictions crowded in so thick upon him, that as he often professes, they made him even weary of his life. And there is none of us that has any priviledge or exemption, or greater security from Diseases than *Job*, nor have we Bodies of Brass, or Sinews of Iron more than he, but we have Bodies subject to the same Infirmities, and liable to be invaded by the same Diseases, if God to make an experiment of our patience shall think fit to handle us as severely as he did *Job*, and to inflict the same Diseases upon us: And therefore we need not so much desire long life and length



length of days as commonly we do ;  
Because it may so happen, that be-  
fore we run out half our race, or  
come to the middle of our Course,  
besides the troubles that are from  
without, we may meet with such a  
numerous train of bodily afflictions,  
that may make us more covetous of  
death than ever we were of life, and  
we may live to know so much sor-  
row and pain before we die, that  
like *Job* we may be ready to curse  
our Birth Day , and wish that we  
had never been born : And there-  
fore we should not be so very un-  
willing to depart and leave the  
World at any time, though never so  
soon ; because we may suppose, that  
the longer we continue in it the  
worse it may be for us, and although  
we are in health at present, and en-  
joy our selves finely , yet Diseases  
may within a little time overtake and  
grow upon us, which may make our  
life a perfect torment to us , and  
cause us to consume our days in mi-

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sery. To speak compendiously, all Parents and others have little reason to ingulph themselves in sorrows for the Death of their Friends and Relations, and more especially if it be early and natural, because when they are taken away so soon they happily miss of those sore and grievous distempers which in running out the whole stage of life, do seize upon oftentimes, and render this present life extreamly bitter and unacceptable. And indeed what comfort is there to see our Friends often sick, or roaring with the Stone or the Gout, or some acute pain, or to have them of an ill habit of Body, or of a broken health, and to be ever crazy and lingring with some fixt and incurable Disease? What pleasure is it to see our Relations rotten and unsound, and patcht up with Medicines, and supported with the Arts of Physick, and kept alive by nice and superstitious observations of diet? or what delight can we take

in

in injoying our Friends when they cannot enjoy themselves? And what reason then have we to lay so much to heart the death of our Friends and Relations, and to pine away meerly for sorrow that they are gone? whereas they are now freed from all the sorrow and contagion of bodily distempers, and have escaped those sore burthens which we are like to feel and suffer if we stay here: Methinks we should rather comfort our selves, as we may well suppose *David* did, to think that our Relations when they are dead and gone, are past the shock and fury of a Disease, that they have endured one brunt for all; that they have charg'd that Enemy home, which we so much fear and must expect every day to encounter withal: so that considering how we that are left behind are to run the Gantlet through Troops of sorrow, and to pass the Pikes of a thousand Diseases; tis highly unreasonable to mourn  
and

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and sorrow for the dead, they being past all possibility of Diseases, and far removed from this Climate of Sickness and Death.

Sixthly, Another thing which might restrain *David's* sorrowing for the loss of his Child, might be this consideration: That it was releas'd from the great pains and misery which it lately felt and endured.

It is certain and indubitable, that the Soul does not quit its Mansion of the Body without great strivings and reluctance, and though it be consider'd that the Child was but in its Infancy, and newly in possession of life, and that the Soul and Body had contracted but a late acquaintance, and that the Friendship was very new; yet where there is such a strict Conjunction as there is between the Soul and the Body, though but for a moment of time, the separation cannot be without great grief and sorrow; where there is such a  
close

close union and intimacy, there is no parting without pain and trouble; and consequently, though the Soul of the Child was now just enter'd into its New Tenement; yet it was so firmly settled, and had taken that deep rooting, that it could not be remov'd or ejected out of possession without great disturbance. And therefore to see a Child struggling for life, and to have only breath enough to intitle it to life, could not but wonderfully affect and produce great Agonies of sorrows in the hearts of the Spectators. And we may observe, that men have naturally that compassion as to pity even a Brute when it lies in pain and misery, and look upon it as an act of mercy to dispatch it out of the way. And therefore *David* seeing his Child in that extream anguish and distress, in that sickness to Death, and that there was no way to ease and relieve it, could not but reflect upon it as a singular mercy of God to take away the

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the Child, and to put an end to such a painful and miserable life. *David* could not forbear weeping and sadly lamenting over his Child when he saw it in the pangs of Death, and in those frightful Convulsions which were precedaneous to its dissolution. But when it pleas'd God to seal up its breath, and to give it a happy Issue out of this troublesome World, then *David* began to be better satisfied, and to be somewhat comforted with the consideration that God had in mercy released his Child from that pain and misery which it lately underwent, and the sight whereof would have pierc'd the hardest heart living. So that all those that have the sad opportunity of standing by their Relations and Friends when they are upon their sick Beds, and in the approaches of Death, and there to observe what a tumult and commotion nature is in at that time, and with what pain and trouble the Soul and Body take  
their



their leave one of the other, must needs conclude their parting and separation to be a more dismal and amazing sight than a Divorce between the most desperate Lovers. Let us but be present with our Friends in the heat and rage of their Distemper, or in the ultimate efforts of life, and we shall then see a tremendous and ghastly spectacle, which is hardly to be related without tears, and cannot be seen without horror and astonishment. O the hollow sighs, and the deep sobs and piercing groans of our dying Friends, which are enough to wound any heart living, and to strike that dread upon us, that the sound of their cries and groans shall never be forgotten, and can we pretend to pity them when we see them in so much anguish and distress, and in the depths of misery, and shall we so contradict our pretences to sorrow, and our compassion for them in the bitterness of Death, as to be troubled  
when

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when they are out of misery, and to deplore their going to rest. Shall we weep and mourn to see our Friends upon the Rack, and in great torment, and shall we take on the more when they are past the sense and feeling of any pain? How can we reconcile this Posthumous Passion to common reason? Or can we think to persuade people that we lov'd our Relations dearly, when they see us grieve when they were in misery, but to grieve more when they are stept into happiness? In a word, we may yield to the meltings of nature, or the tenderness of our affections, and gratify our compassions in mourning for our Friends when they are in great misery, and the Agonies of Death. For a compassionate grief is both natural and reasonable, and if we have any spark of good nature we cannot but be mollify'd at the mournful accents of the most despicable Creature when 'tis in pain and great extremities. But then

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then to mourn excessively for our Friends when they are out of pain, and the bitterness of Death is past, is both unreasonable and unchristian: unreasonable because they have endured and pass'd the worst, and are perfectly discharg'd from those troubles and sorrows which those that remain alive are subject unto; and 'tis unchristian, because it gives occasion to people to suspect our belief of a Resurrection and a future Life; and that we are not really perswaded that our Friends are removed for the better, and much for their advantage. And therefore the Apostle in the first to the *Thessal.* 4. *ch.* and 13. *v.* admonishes Christians not to grieve and take on for the dead as others which have no hope, lest they should by that means scandalize their Religion, and render their belief of a Resurrection suspected and dubitable: so that we are concern'd as Christians, and as we tender the reputation of our Christian

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Christian Faith, not to be lavish of our tears, nor over profuse in our expences of sorrow for the dead, lest we should be suspected of believing our Friends happier here than they will be hereafter. But we should rather in a manner rejoice at the departure of those who have liv'd well and innocently, and die in the Lord: Forasmuch as the Apostle tells us, they *shall rest from their labours* and have *all tears wip't away from their Eyes,* Revel. 7. 17. And we should as our Church wisely directs us in the office for the Burial of the dead, give hearty thanks to God that it hath pleased him to deliver our Dear Friends and Relations out of the miseries of this sinful World, which may furnish us with another consideration that might possibly incur into *Dauids* mind, and help to suspend and allay his sorrowing for his dead Child, and that is this:

That it was remov'd far above the power of sin and temptation.

We

## Death of their Children. 93

We at present, as the Apostle *Paul* complains, carry about us a Body of sin and death. We are subject to manifold sins and temptations, and have brought with us into the World those corruptions which in time will ripen into and sally forth in great actual transgressions. *Job* makes a kind of wonder at it, that any man should think he can be perfectly pure and innocent in this body of flesh: *For what is man that he should be clean? or he that is born of a woman that he should be righteous? Job 15. 14.* and so *David* tells us, *Psal. 51. 5.* That sin is the Inheritance of our Parents, that we are infected with it in the Womb, and that we are born with propensions to evil, *Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my Mother conceive me.* So that the seeds of disobedience are lodged in our nature, and the ground-work of sin is laid deep within us, and there is nothing wanting but time and opportunity

H

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portunity to make it bring forth in abundance: So that when our Children die very young, and go early to their Graves, we may comfort our selves with this consideration, that we lose them in good time, and before they have added any actual to original sin; and that if they had liv'd much longer they would have contracted a new and further guilt, and perhaps have advanc'd in sin as they did in Years: for 'tis certain, that the strength of nature gives strength to our sins too, and 'tis only Age that qualifies and fits us for great and notorious wickedness. So that that sin which was only in Embryo in our infancy comes within a few years to a perfect shape, and our propensions to evil, in a small process of time are reduced to real and visible acts. My meaning is, that although there is a natural aptness and proclivity in Mankind to sin and err from the Laws of our Maker, yet sin does lie hid and brooding in the  
time



*Death of their Children.* 95

time of our infancy, and is only hatcht into perfection by the addition of longer time: and although we have all the principles of wickedness inherent in us at the very first moment of our Nativity; yet we are too impotent to commit evil, and to offend God at that rate, as when we come to a full stature in Years and knowledge. We may be full of bad inclinations when we are young and Children, but 'tis only Age that can make us capable of doing mischief, and to be workers of iniquity, and we cannot so highly provoke God when we are ignorant and childish, and know nothing of him, as when we come to the perfect use of reason, and to know his will, and yet run Counter to it. And therefore the Death of our Children may be a happy prevention of their sinning: and if they live so long as to receive the benefit of Baptism, and to be regenerate and born anew of Water and the Holy Ghost, and so

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be made lively members of Christs Church, we are bound to thank God for the mercy of their Regeneration, and that they had their sins wash'd away in the laver of Holy Baptism; so as that they go much purer out of the World than they came into it: whereas if they had liv'd longer in the World they would have contracted a greater guilt, and had more sins to answer for; they would have been continually liable to temptations, and in danger of falling into great and grievous sins, and to be corrupted by the bad examples which abound in all places of the World. And therefore there is no reason why Parents should so much lament their Childrens leaving them so soon; if they do seriously consider, that 'tis a naughty World we live in, and that mens love and practice of wickedness is exceeding great, and that 'tis impossible to escape all the pollutions that are in it: and if they do further consider, how much

much humane nature is tainted with original sin and corruption, which prompts us on to evil continually, and what a subtle and vigilant Adversary we have, who is always seeking to beguile and destroy us; and how thick set the World is with snares and temptations; I say, if this consideration did but enter into our minds, it would be of great force and power to assuage our Passion, and to allay our sorrow for the death of our Friends and Relations: it being a very comfortable thing to contemplate the happiness and privilege of those that have shook off the clogs and fetters of the flesh, and let fall their Bodies, the troublesome Mantles of their Souls, and are now expatiating in Regions of Bliss and Happiness, and live in the pure Element of Goodness, and where 'tis impossible that any temptation should approach, or sin have any Dominion over them.

Lastly; Another thing which

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might stop *David's* sorrowing for  
the loss of his Child, might be this  
consideration, that it was the will  
of God it should be so.

He considered that it was altogether foolish and in vain to enter into any controversie with God about his dealings with his Child, or to stand expostulating the justice of God in taking it away. For he was convinc'd that Gods will ought to be a Law unto us, and that there is no need of disputing the Righteousness and Equity thereof, it being always rul'd and determin'd by his wisdom, and justice, and goodness. For though God be of an infinite and uncontroulable power, and can do whatsoever he pleases both in Heaven and Earth; yet there is a Maxime in Theology as well as Policy, That the King of Heaven can do no wrong. It must be acknowledg'd by us all, that our life and being is the gift and blessing of God, and so is the life of our Children too; and

and therefore when God does in mercy give us Children, so he may with justice take them away. For may not he dispose of his gifts, and do with his own as he pleases? God lent us Children for a little time on purpose to please us; shall we be troubled when he resumes them to himself, or griev'd when he requires them back? we are to observe, that there is a great difference between Gods way of disposing his gifts, and that of mens. For though it be common with men to make a Deed of Gift, and to transfer their own right to a thing wholly to another, so as to lose all propriety in it; yet God does not make the same disposition of his gifts in that absolute manner; but when he gives us Riches, or Honour, or Children, or any other gifts, he does not make over to us all the title to, and interest in them, but reserves to himself a power of Revocation, so as that he may demand them back at pleasure; he

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only gives us the use and comfort of them for a time, but never parts with the propriety, or resigns up all his claim to them: And besides, we should consider, that although God does put those Children into our power, and under our jurisdiction, which he is pleas'd to give us; yet that Parents have not that absolute power over their Children that God has, nor are they wholly at their disposal, as to the great Issues of Life and Death, which are only in Gods Hands. And therefore though we may look upon our Children as our own, as being flesh of our flesh, and bone of our bone, though we may appropriate them to our selves, and reckon we have the best title to them of all our Possessions; yet still God retains the supream right, and has the first and oldest title to them, and we are only deputed by God to be the Overseers and Guardians of our Children: and therefore as God is pleased to commit our Children to  
our



our care for some time, yet when he does not like they should be any longer under our tuition, he does in mercy and kindness to them take them away; when he sees it not good for them to continue with us, he then to shew his Authority, removes them from us, and calls them home. And therefore Parents would do well to consider, that God has more right to their Children than themselves, and that they are absolutely at his disposal, but not at theirs, that they have not that power of Life and Death over their Children which God has: And therefore Parents have no reason to be in that Hurricane and storm of Passion upon the loss of their Children, unless they are troubled that God should have his will more than they have theirs; unless they are grieved that God should take upon him to dispose of their Children without their consent and liking; which argues a great impiety of mind, as if  
they

they thought that God was either unjust in taking away the Children from their right Owners, or unmerciful in not sparing of their lives, which was a greater comfort to them than all other enjoyments ; whereas it would be much better, and tend to hush and silence all the sorrows of Parents for the loss of their Children, to consider, that they are but under-Proprietors of their Children, and that they came first from God, before they came to them ; and that as God is the donour of them, so he may well be allow'd the disposal of them , whether for Life or Death. And besides, it should be consider'd, that Gods will is and ought to be supream, and Master of ours ; and that we should patiently leave them to Gods will and pleasure, when he does not think fit to leave them to ours. It was an excellent saying , and submissive speech of *Jobs*, *ch. 1. 21.* who when God was pleased to bereave him of all his  
Children

Children by violent and unnatural Deaths, and of all his Worldly goods too, yet submitted to his great misfortunes with an invincible patience and mildness, saying, *Naked came I out of my Mothers Womb, and naked shall I return thither, the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, Blessed be the name of the Lord.* Here is an Example beyond Example of Patience, and quiet submission to the will of God in one of the greatest and severest trials imaginable; here indeed is an Example fit for our imitation, and should be drawn into practice upon the like occasion. And it would highly become Parents and others, and indeed is the duty of all to lay themselves at the will of God, and with all humble Prostrations resign up their wills to his, and to resign up their Children and Relations freely to him, who first gave them freely to them. And to say in like manner with *Job*, God has indeed  
blessed

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blessed us with Children, but has  
not thought fit to continue them to  
us: and though we could have been  
well content to have enjoy'd them,  
if God had so pleas'd; yet we are  
content to want them, being he  
has thought it better both for them  
and for us to take them away. *The*  
*Lord has given, and the Lord has*  
*taken away; Blessed be the name of*  
*the Lord.*

\* *Ita non est quod*  
*nos suspiciamus, tan-*  
*quam inter nostra po-*  
*siti: mutuo accepimus.*  
*Usus fructus noster est,*  
*cujus tempus ille arbi-*  
*ter muneris sui tempe-*  
*rat. Nos oportet in*  
*promptu habere quæ in*  
*incertum diem data*  
*sunt; & appellatos*  
*sine querela reddere.*  
*Pessimi est Debitoris*  
*Creditoris facere con-*  
*vitium. Omnes ergo*  
*nostros, & quos super-*  
*stites lege nascendi op-*  
*tamus, & quos præ-*  
*cedere iustissimum ipsorum votum est, sic amare debemus*  
*tanquam nihil nobis de perpetuitate; immo nihil de*  
*diuturnitate eorum promissum est. Sen. cap. x. ad Man.*

\* *Seneca* will teach  
us otherwise in  
words to this pur-  
pose, that we ought  
not to reckon all  
that we enjoy our  
own, or to look up-  
on our Children as  
a sure Inheritance,  
and entailed upon  
us, but consider, that  
they are of the same  
uncertain hold and  
tenure

tenure as other outward blessings are, that they are given us but for an uncertain time, and that we must not promise to our selves any long or certain enjoyment of them; if we are allow'd the use, and benefit, and comfort of our Children for a time, 'tis not fitting that we should mutter or think much to part with them when God demands his own, and requires back what he only committed to us by way of lene; but rather be in a readiness to part with our Children and all other blessings when God will not trust us with them any longer.

Having thus shew'd upon what considerations *David* might well cease sorrowing for his dead Child, and which may be of excellent use and service to support and comfort others under the like losses, and to prevent all excessive mourning for the Death of their Friends and Relations, especially when they die young, I shall now winde up the whole

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whole Discourse with a word or  
two,

First, By way of Reproof.

Secondly, By way of Exhortation.

First, By way of Reproof to all  
those that are apt to quarrel with  
Providence, and to entertain hard  
thoughts of God, as if he were either  
unjust or unmerciful when he takes  
away their nearest and dearest Rela-  
tions from them; and do often in  
the bitterness of their Souls, and  
the great anguish of their spirits,  
charge God foolishly, and speak un-  
advisedly with their lips, and think  
they do well (like *Jonah*) to fret  
against the Almighty, in that he  
deals with them after such a manner,  
and will not suffer them to enjoy the  
desire of their Eyes, and the joy of  
their Hearts, so long as they wish  
and desire. They assert with a great  
deal of sorrow, that their Soul was  
wrapt up in the life of such and such  
a Child, that it was an *Absolom* for  
its Beauty, and a *Solomon* for its  
Wisdom,



Wisdom, and a *Moses* for its meekness and good nature; that it was very pregnant and a great Wit, and gave great and lively Specimens of future Vertue and Wisdom; and therefore for God to deprive them of a Child that had naturally such Charms, and whose vertuous temper and disposition did presage so much comfort to themselves, and so great a benefit to the World, must needs make deep and melancholy impressions upon their Spirits, and put them into an extream Passion. And thus Parents and others are apt to clamour against and censure the dealings of an afflicting Providence, when it comes home to them, and touches them in part of themselves, and such as they profess to love as dearly as their own Souls: whereas 'tis an utter fault in them thus to repine at the hand of God, and they know not what Spirit they are of when they fall into such fits of Passion, and paroxysms of discontent, refusing

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refusing like *Rachel* to be comforted, because their Children and Relations are not; and wish like *Elijah* in a pet, that God would take away their life too, for they are no better than those that are gone before them. But is this like men or like Christians to be absorpt and swallowed up in a *vortex* of sorrow, and to be carried away with such an Euroclydon and violent storm of Passion? O the great folly and wickedness that is in the hearts of men, thus to grumble at Providence, and to be so much out of humour as to fall sick as *Ahab* did for very vexation that we cannot enjoy what we have a mind to, and a great longing to possess. So great and stupendous is our stubbornness and obstinacy not to yield to Gods will nor submit to his pleasure, but to take on and rave like mad people, and to complain grievously like *Laban*, that we have lost our Gods, our greatest hopes and comforts, when  
God

God has only taken away our Idols. But we had best have a care that we be not so very impatient and outrageous when God takes away our Relations from us; and so cause and provoke him to write more bitter things against us, and bereave us of all our Worldly Comforts, and of the light of his favour, and the supports of his Spirit, which would be the greatest and forest loss that can possibly befall us.

Secondly, By way of Exhortation to Parents and all others who may be concern'd in the loss of Relations and Friends, that they would endeavour to compose themselves to a quiet, and humble, and patient submission to the will of God in the severest of his dispensations; that they would comport and demean themselves with that temper and moderation at the Death of their Friends, as becomes Christians who profess a firm belief of a future Resurrection, and a future  
I life

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life in glory; and that they would  
banish all unkind, and uncharita-  
ble thoughts of God when he is  
pleased to take away their Darlings  
and Favourites, and quietly acquiesce  
in his Providence, and endeavour to  
believe, that what God doth is best  
both for themselves and their Rela-  
tions, saying with all humility and  
submission of Soul, It is the Lord,  
let him do what seemeth him  
good.

Thirdly, It would be wisdom in  
all Parents and others to consider,  
that their Children and Friends are  
mortal, and of humane race, and  
that they are born in order to die.  
And so *Seneca* advises his Friend  
*Marcia*, not to grieve or take on  
desperately for the loss of her Son,  
but to consider, that mortality was  
an appendage to humane Nature,  
*Et ex quo primum lucem vidit, iter*  
*mortis ingressus est*; that he no  
sooner began to live but he began  
to die, and that life is a constant  
journey-

Death of their Children. 111

journeying and properation to the Grave. And 'tis well worth our remembering what is reported of *Anaxagoras*, that when he was warmly engag'd in a Philosophical Disquisition, and word was brought unto him that his Son was dead, he did not seem in any disorder, or to be compos'd at the news, but went on with his Discourse very smoothly, and only made this reply, That he knew that he was the Father of one that was mortal. *Anaxagoræ inter familiares suos de natura rerum differenti, filii mortem nunciatam tradunt: nihilq; aliud ab eo responsum, nisi, se illum genuisse mortalem.* Cicero de Consola. And therefore all persons to prevent the being so much troubled and startled at the Death of their Relations, should often meditate on Death, and be frequently possess'd with thoughts of their own and others mortality; and when they live in a daily expectation of their own Death and those

I 2                      that

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that belong unto them, they cannot be amaz'd at the early Death of their Relations, or sorely afflicted when it pleaseth God to take them away first. For the looking upon the life of their Relations to be altogether as uncertain as their own, must needs make their death more tolerable, than when they reckon and depend upon their living; *quæ multo antè prævisa sunt, languidius incurrunt*, sayes *Seneca*. When we think of a thing long before-hand, it loses of its terror, and we are not so much troubled at it when it actually comes. So that if we did but consider that our Children and Relations are as mortal as our selves, and that 'tis no rarity for them to die before us, we should not proceed to break our hearts with overmuch grief, or to bury our selves in sorrow at the death of our Relations, come it sooner or later. But as *Seneca* observes, *In hoc omnes errore versamur, ut non putemus ad mortem,*



*tem, nisi senes inclinatosque jam  
urgere, cum illò infantia statim &  
juventa, omnisq; ætas ferat; 'tis a  
general error, and popular to think  
that the Aged and the Decrepit must  
needs die first; whereas the youngest  
are as liable to Death as they, and  
are taken away every whit as soon.  
And again in the same Consolatory  
Discourse; Tot præter Domum  
nostram ducuntur exequiæ, de mor-  
te non cogitamus, tot acerba funera.  
Nos togam nostrorum infantium,  
nos militiam & Paternæ heredita-  
tis successionem animo agitamus.*  
There are (sayes he) so many Fu-  
nerals and spectacles of mortality  
pass by our doors every day, and  
we do not regard them, nor lay to  
heart this Death of others: But we  
are thinking to make our Children  
fine and great, and what great Heirs  
they will be after our decease: But  
we think of nothing less than our  
Childrens dying, which makes their  
death so very grievous and surpri-

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zing unto us: Whereas by a due  
premeditation on death, and fore-  
stalling it in our thoughts, both our  
own death, and that of our Relati-  
ons would become less terrible and  
astonishing, as being a thing which  
we every day expected and stood  
looking for.

Fourthly, It would be very rea-  
sonable and prudential to command  
or check our passion in due time,  
and not to let it spin out to too  
great a length. For as *Seneca* tells  
*Marcia*, that our tears cannot al-  
ways flow, nor our mourning last  
always. *Dolorem dies consumit,*  
*quamvis contumacissimum*, a little  
time, or a few days, will exhaust  
the Fountain of our tears, and drain  
it dry, and overcome the most obsti-  
nate grief. And *Cicero* says the same  
thing. *Quod etiamsi nolis, tempore*  
*tamen ipso extenuatur & evanescit*,  
that is, we must give over sorrow-  
ing at last, whether we will or no,  
and when we have wept so long  
that

that we can weep no more; and therefore 'tis a stark shame that our reason should not do that which a little time will effect; that it should not put a stop to our tears, which within a little while will dry up of themselves. *Multum autem interest, utrum tibi permittas mœrere, an imperes*, says the same *Seneca*, 'tis more honourable to suppress our passions, than to let them run themselves out of breath and to sink of their own accord.

And in another place, he tells *Marcia*, that it is wisdom to husband our tears well, and not to let them stream too plentifully, but to be sparing of them, and to reserve some against another time. *Lachrymæ nobis deerunt antequam dolendi causæ*. For if we live in the World, we shall meet with many occasions to weep and mourn, and shall never want matter of sorrow and trouble. And therefore we should make it evident by our ceasing to mourn for

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the dead in just and convenient time, that our reason has that ascendant over our Passion, as not to let it run too far, or spend it self quite at once, whereas there may be great reason and occasion for it at some other time.

Lastly, and to conclude all, Let none suspect that this Discourse had any aim to promote or introduce a Stoical Apathy among Christians, whose Religion is a compleat body of mercy, and a perfect systeme of tender-heartedness and compassions, and teaches men to be pitiful and compassionate and melting above the common standard of humanity. Let none, I say, so misconstrue it, as because it argues against excessive and immoderate mourning for the dead, that therefore it intends to harden mens hearts, and to bar them from paying a just tribute of tears and sorrow to the memory of their Deceased Friends; or because it declares against effeminate weepings  
and

and lamentations, that therefore it will not allow us the sense and feeling of men. *Nec verò credi velim*, sayes Cicero, *me, quia dolori nimio repugnem, idcirco dolorem omni ex parte improbare, omnesq; illius ex animo filias evellendas existimare, &c.* But our design is chiefly to perswade men to curb and moderate their Passions and sorrows for the Dead, by shewing, that if they would but listen to the Counsels and Dictates of reason, it would inform and convince them of the folly of grieving and afflicting themselves to no purpose, and when all the sorrowing in the World will do no good, *Parcamus Lachrymis*, sayes Seneca, *nihil proficientibus*; and also how contradictory it is to the Faith of a Christian to continue mourning for the Dead, as if they were irreversibly gone and lost to all intents and purposes of happiness, as if Death were an utter extinction and annihilation of their beings, and as  
if

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if there were no immortality after this short and fading life is ended. 'Tis true, that the Stoicks enjoined their Disciples to dam up the current of their natural affections and passions, and not to let them forth in the least degree upon any occasion whatsoever. And this Apathy they pretended and boasted to be the aim and perfection of their Philosophy; whereas the Christian Philosophy is not near so rigid, but allows us to give way to our passions in some measure, and upon just and solemn occasions. We read of the Lamentations of *Jeremiah*, and how that the Death of the good King *Josiah* was solemniz'd with great mournings and lamentations, all *Israel* mourned for *Josiah*, and *Judah* lamented *Josiah*, 2 *Chro.* 35. 24. And that which doth more authorize our Mourning for our Friends, is the carriage and practice of those devout men in the Gospel, who carried *Stephen* to his Burial, and made  
great



great Lamentation over him, *Acts* 8. 2. Nay a further Confirmation of the lawfulness of mourning for our deceased Friends, is the Example of our Saviour himself, who wept over *Lazarus's* Grave, as we may see *John* 11. 35. which the standers by made a great Argument of his love and concernment for the Death of *Lazarus*. And 'tis very well known that the Jews lookt upon tears and mourning to be so natural and proper at a Funeral, that they hired Women called מְקוֹנְנוֹת, *Jer.* 9. 17. (and so had the *Romans* their *Præfice* for the very same purpose,) to weep at Burials for the greater solemnity, so that rather than there should be any want of tears upon such sad occasions, they Celebrated the Obsequies of their Friends with a mercenary sorrow; and therefore it was a severe and unnatural Injunction of *Tiberius* to charge the Friends and Relations of those persons that he put to Death, not to mourn

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mourn for them, or so much as shed a tear at their Execution upon pain of his highest displeasure. *Interdictum ne capite damnatos lugerent, Suetonius.* Whereas our Religion does not require us to put off bowels of pity and compassion, as the Philosophy of the Stoicks, or the cruelty of the Tyrant did; but only prohibits us to pluck up the Sluces, or to open the Flood-gate of our Passions, so as to let them run with a mighty Torrent, and to overflow the bounds of reason and moderation. But then although we are permitted by the Example of our Saviour to sympathize with the sufferings of humane nature, and to grieve according to the proportions of humanity, for the loss of our Friends and Relations; yet we are to have a special care that our sorrows are not unreasonable or immoderate: for as no sorrow shews want of humanity, so too much shews the want of Religion. For by our immoderate

rate grievings we seem to renounce our Creed, or at least to distrust the truth of one of its prime and fundamental Articles, which is the Resurrection of the Dead. And therefore St. Paul seeing the Christians in his days were apt to grow exorbitant in their sorrowings for the Dead, thinks fit to give them this instruction, *1 Theff. 4. 13. But I would not have you to be ignorant, Brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus, will God bring with him*; in which words he does plainly declare, that we do in a manner confute and dissolve our Belief of the great Article of the Resurrection, if we lay the loss of our Friends so much to heart, and ingulph our selves in sorrows as those that have no hope. And indeed, what can be more unlike, or contrary to the

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the Faith and Belief of Christians,  
than that unruly and excessive sor-  
row of *Rachel* for the loss of her  
Children, whom the Scripture seems  
not only to note, but to brand  
and stigmatize for her impatience,  
in that she wept for her Children, and  
would not be comforted, because  
they were not? Ah Lord! what a sad  
thing is this to contradict our pro-  
fession, to say, we believe a Resur-  
rection, and yet sorrow as if there  
were none? But in short, either we  
believe a Resurrection, or we do  
not; if we do believe it, why do  
we bewail the Death of our Friends  
with so much bitterness and lamen-  
tation, as if they were utterly lost  
and gone, as if they were past all  
joys and comfort, and were to pe-  
rish for ever? *Si enim à miseriis*  
*abstrahit, si in meliorem vitam in-*  
*ducit; si neq; misera ipsa est, nec*  
*ullius particeps miseriæ, cur mala*  
*censetur? sin hoc largitur, ut sem-*  
*piteris bonis potiamur, vitamq;*  
*quam*

*quam mortalem habemus, aeternam adipiscamur, quid morte beatius esse possit?* that is, says *Cicero*, if we do really believe that death doth abstract and deliver us from the miseries of this World, and sets us far out of harms way, and that 'tis an entrance and introduction to a better life, then what reason have we to look upon it as such a sad and grievous thing to die? But if it be further granted that Death puts us into the possession of Eternal and never-failing blessings, and that it slides us from a short and fading to an Everlasting Life; we are then to repute Death our best and dearest Friend, in that it leads and ushers us to such Endless Happiness. But if we do not believe a Resurrection, why are we so rash and formal as to own an Article that we dare not rely on? Ah! We little think that the greatest Atheist in the World cannot make a greater Argument against our Religion than we do our selves,

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selves, when we let loose the reins of our passions, and refuse to be comforted for the dead, and wound and pierce our hearts thorough with great and mighty sorrows, thereby testifying that we little believe a Life to come, or a better State than this is, or that our Friends have exchang'd for the better: and therefore we had best look to it, and endeavour to curb and check our passions, that we do not give occasion to our Enemies to blaspheme and say, where is that Heaven, that place of rest and blessedness which you so much talk of? where is that Faith of a future Life and a judgment to come, which you so zealously profess? how can you perswade us that you believe what you profess, seeing that upon the trial you are ready to kill your selves with very grief for the Death of your Friends and Relations, and thereby give a strong suspicion, that you think this World the best Paradise for your Friends  
to



to live in, and the other the best only to talk of.

To conclude, Let us endeavour to possess our hearts and minds with a firm hope and perswasion of a future State and Eternal Life; and then we shall be the freer to think of our own Death, and be less troubled to part with our Friends and Relations when God thinks fit to take them away. *Simplicius* in his Comment upon *Epicetus* cap. 33. does rightly observe, how variously we are affected at the Death of others and the Death of our own Relations, *εάν τε τινος ἀλλοῦ ἀποθνήσκῃ ἢ τινος ἐδούλου ἢ οὐ ἀνθρώπου, οὐτι. ἐκ ἀνθρώπων ὅτι τοῦ συμβάν.* If we hear, sayes he, of the Death of anothers Wife or Children, we are not much concern'd, but put it off very slightly, and say, that their dying is no wonder at all, and that there is no reason to be much troubled at it, forasmuch as Death is natural and common to all. But then, sayes he, when we  
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happen to lose any of our own Relations, we seem to have another guise opinion of Death, and to change our note, *ἀλλὰ ὅταν τὸ ἐαυτῶ τινος ἀποθανῇ, διδύς οἱ μὲν καὶ πάλας ἔχω, καὶ θρήνοι, καὶ τραγωδία, ὡς ἡμῖν μένους ὡσαύτως τινος συμβεβηκός*, that is, We hear of and see the death and burial of others patiently enough, and without being much troubled or inwardly concern'd, but when it comes home to our selves, and we lose any of our own dear Friends and Relations, we are presently in a storm, and rise into a supream passion, and in the bitterness of our Souls cry out, that we are miserable and undone, and the unhappiest people in the World, and that there is no loss like our loss, and that none has such great afflictions as we, and then there is nothing to be heard or seen but great Lamentations and Mourning, and a huge Scene of sorrows. In which words, the Philosopher does rightly note our partiality to our selves,

selves, and how that we esteem and look upon Death to be only unkind and cruel to our selves and those that belong to us, and that we can hear and think kindly enough of it at a distance, but when it comes nigh us, and touches us in our Relations, then we are all mutiny and confusion. And therefore it is a great Argument of our folly and indiscretion, to waver and alter so much in our opinion of Death, as to entertain worse thoughts of it at one time than another. For albeit, the more than ordinary sympathy that is between us and our Relations, may defend and justifie our sorrowing somewhat more for them than for perfect Strangers; yet it is against common sense and reason, that we should be so desperately disquieted at that Providence which deprives us of our Relations, whereas we are so little concern'd at the common fatality of Mankind. And therefore it behoves us in point of Prudence,

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dence, to labour to have always the same thoughts and opinions of Death, and to count it no more cruel, no more an Enemy, when it seizeth upon our own flesh and blood, than when it seizeth upon the rest of humane race: And if we make no great matter of the death of others whom we see daily fall to the ground, looking upon it as a natural thing for them to die: so let us consider, that 'tis every whit as natural for our Relations to die, and nothing happens to them but what is common to all flesh living. And this consideration the Philosopher looks upon as very just and reasonable, and prescribes it as an excellent Remedy and Antidote against all immoderate sorrowing for the loss of our dearest Friends and Relations: But alas! why do I urge such a poor consideration as that of Death being common to all men, to assuage and mitigate our sorrows for the Dead, as if any consideration in  
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the World could do it more effectually than our Christian Hope and the belief of another and better life hereafter. Some indeed may attempt and endeavour to quiet and silence their sorrows by Arguments drawn from reason, and the acute sayings of Philosophers; and think they may be able from meer natural courage, and some bold principles, to laugh at and despise Death as well as the Stoicks did in their high rants and fullen moods: but no Arguments, or the most stubborn Principles in the World, can be of equal force with our Christian Hope for that purpose. A Hope that opens to us the Casements of Heaven, and represents to us in a great measure the glories of the Resurrection; the exact and full knowledge whereof cannot be attain'd in this narrow state of mortality, and is far transcending all humane reach and comprehension; so that for me to go about to make a full and compleat description  
of

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of the excellencies and perfections  
appropriate to the future state,  
would be the same fondness as to  
attempt to illustrate a Star with my  
Finger : But yet for our great com-  
fort and encouragement at present,  
the Scripture gives us this plain no-  
tice and information of a glorious  
transformation as to our vile and ter-  
restrial part ; How that then our vile  
Bodies shall be chang'd , and made  
like unto Christs glorious Body, that  
this mortal shall put on immortality,  
and this corruptible incorruption.  
How then can we that have this Hope  
faint in our mind , or so much as  
shed a tear at the departure of our  
Friends out of this miserable Life,  
seeing it will be so much for their  
advantage , so very much for their  
preferment to leave us ? For they  
that are accounted worthy to obtain  
that World, and the Resurrection  
from the Dead , shall strangely ex-  
ceed themselves , and surpass all  
the excellencies of humane Na-  
ture

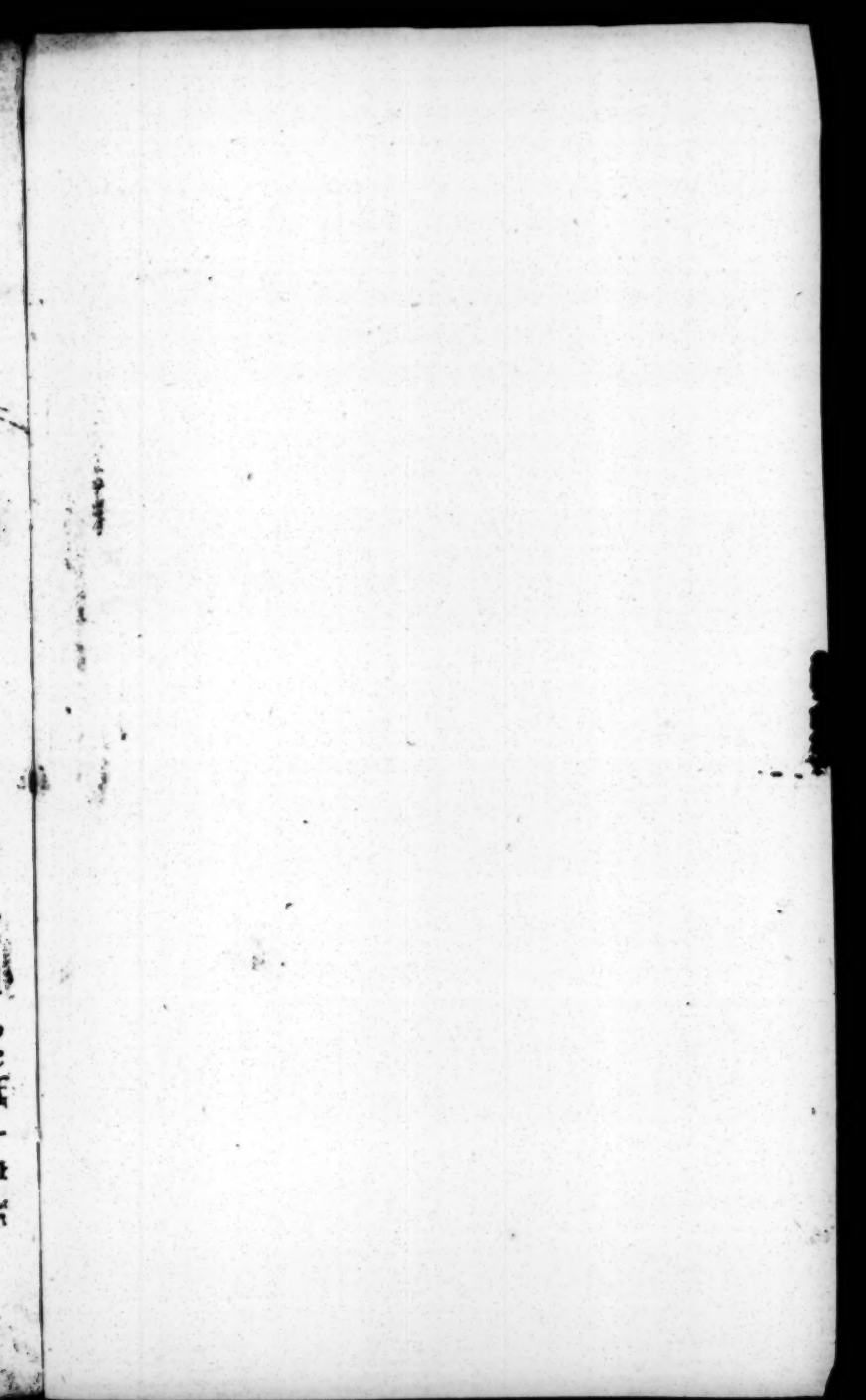


ture at present, and be ἰσάγγελοι, equal to the Angels, and συμμορφόμενοι, bear the Image and Form of Christ himself. And this equality to Angels, and likeness to Christ, is no more than what we have sure and certain grounds to hope for from the plain and positive words of Scripture; and therefore we seem either not to believe or else to envy the happiness of those that depart this Life, when we are in such extream Agonies of sorrow for their removal from us. Wherefore let this Hope be always our support and comfort, that Death is a certain advantage to our Friends that have so lived as to die the Death of the Righteous; and that they are freed from the least touch or feeling of those sicknesses, and pains, and Diseases, and Imperfections, and from those toils and hardships which this mortal frail condition exposes us unto. And having this Hope and belief of a better life hereafter, Let us rather bless God  
for

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for delivering our dearest Friends from this present evil World, and taking them away from the evil to come; Let us, I say, bless God for doing that singular favour to our Friends whom we lov'd so well, as to translate them to Glory and Happiness before us, and in giving them such an early possession of that Crown of Life which we all so much strive and pray to attain, rather than repine at Gods Providence in not letting them stay any longer with us in this Valley of Tears. Let us look upon Death rather as a mercy than a Judgment to our Friends which die in the Lord, for they shall rest from their Labours, and have all Tears wip't away from their Eyes, and shall never know the meaning of a sorrow or trouble any more; in a word, Let us look upon Death as a Friend rather than an Enemy to our Relations, which puts a period to the days of their Pilgrimage, which are but few and evil at the best, and esteem it a blessed change, which is the term of their Bondage, the end of their Cares, the conclusion of their Sorrows, and the beginning of endless Happiness, and which passes them through the Gates of Death to the Kingdom of Glory.

*FINIS.*





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